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VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE PROBLEMATICS OF POSTMODERNISM

by

MATHEW MARTIN ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Edmonton, Alberta
FALL, 1994

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE PROBLEMATICS OF POSTMODERNISM submitted by MATHEW MARTIN in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree MASTER OF ARTS.

Dr. E. L. Bishop E. L. Bishop

Dr. J. Wallace John Wallace

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Date: May 1, 1994

Abstract

This thesis examines the politics of Virginia Woolf's fiction in terms of the problematics of postmodernism. The thesis argues, broadly, that although postmodernism's antifoundationalism problematizes social criticism, a postmodern deconstructive politics is possible, and that Woolf's texts explore several aspects of this possibility. The thesis's first chapter attempts to demonstrate that a deconstructive politics is possible: arguing that to construe postmodernism as merely a license for hermeneutic free play is to work within an undeconstructed binary opposition between conceptual and material, the thesis's first chapter deconstructs this binary opposition and applies deconstructive stategies to the general social text by combining Derridean and Althusserian discourses. Using the conceptual framework defined in the first chapter, each of the following three chapters explores the deconstructive politics of one of Woolf's novels. The thesis's second chapter explores Woolf's deconstruction of the unified masculine subject in Jacob's Room. The thesis's third chapter explores Woolf's deconstruction of the Freudian Oedipal narrative in To The Lighthouse. The thesis's fourth chapter explores Woolf's deconstruction of patriarchal and hegemonic scripts of the good society in The Years

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Introduction: The Problematics of Postmodernism

What is postmodernism, and how can postmodernism further critical understanding of Virginia Woolf? Postmodernism is a term whose definition is far from fixed or agreed upon. Different disciplines, such as architecture, aesthetics, cultural studies, and philosophy, have defined the term differently; for the most part, there is little agreement within each discipline. In this thesis, I take my primary definition of postmodernism and its root term, modernism, from philosophy, for two reasons: it allows me to go beyond merely cataloguing the formal features of Woolf's fiction; it seems to me that postmodernism has a relatively more stable definition in its philosophical usage than in other uses of the term. In "The Postmodern *Weltanschauung* and its Relation to Modernism: An Introductory Survey," Hans Bertens points out that

> in most concepts, and in practically all recent concepts of Postmodernism the matter of ontological uncertainty is absolutely central. It is the awareness of the absence of centers, of privileged languages, higher discourses, that is seen as the most striking difference with Modernism that, in the view of practically all critics, still clung to certain centers and tried to avoid the consequences of the radical indeterminacy that Postmodernism has accepted. (64)

In The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity, G. B. Madison defines modernism and postmodernism within intellectual history:

> "Modernism" denotes what the traditional term "modern philosophy" denotes: that movement of thought which originates with Descartes and which has perpetuated itself up to and into the twentieth century. The term has definite connotations as well. It connotes all the concerns which were constitutive of modern philosophy. These concerns were, basically, of a dual nature; epistemological and foundationalist. What above all characterizes that form of the logocentric metaphysics of presence known as modern philosophy is that it seeks to realize philosophy's traditional goal of achieving a basic, fundamental knowledge (*episteme, Wissenschaft*) of what is (*ta onta*) by turning inward, into the knowing subject himself (conceived of either psychologistically or transcendentally), where it seeks to discover grounds which will allow for certainty in our "knowledge" of what, henceforth, is called "the external world."... the methodological conviction of the modern philosopher is that he may come to know truly that reality which is only indirectly present (re-presented) to him by the senses if only he can order his own "ideas" (*cogitationes*) in accordance with the unquestionable laws of logic. (x)

Postmodernism is the attempt to come to terms with "what [we are] left with after the demise of the epistemological subject and the objective world - after the demise of the very ideas of 'knowledge' and 'truth' (the 'true representation of objective reality')" (x). Fundamental to postmodernism is the ontological uncertainty that results from skepticism about the correspondence between subjective, ideal structures and the objective, real world. Lyotard in The Postmodern Condition captures the larger implications of this when he states that postmodernism is "incredulity toward metanarratives" (xxiv), the intersubjective, social narratives by which modernity's knowledge of the objective world is legitimated.

In their definitions of the terms, Bertens, Madison, and Lyotard emphasize the discontinuity between modernism and postmodernism. With a number of critics, this discontinuity seems to be part of and dependent upon a larger historical discontinuity between modern and postmodern Western society. Lyotard, for example, writes that "our working hypothesis is that the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age. This transition has been under way since at least the end of the 1950's" (3). Lyotard then points out the influence of cybernetics and computers on the creation of the postmodern paradigm of knowledge. However, to claim that postmodern modes of thought were not available before 1950 would be to revert to a monolithic historical determinism postmodernism renders illegitimate. Patricia Waugh in Practising Postmodernism/ Reading Modernism argues that postmodernism is as much an extension of modernism as a break from modernism: "postmodernism is as much a development of existing tendencies in Western thought, as a break with and refutation of them. Postmodernism effectively extends the formal self-reflexivity of Kantian idealism to a limit where there can be no position outside the limits of the instruments of knowledge with which to offer a critique of them" (71). The Kantian categories of space and time are recognized as fictions with no necessary correspondence to external reality; knowledge is turned in on itself to infinite regress - how does one know that one knows? Zygmunt Bauman, in "Postmodernity, or Living with Ambivalence," argues that there are two modes of doubting the legitimacy of narratives that claim to represent reality: the first, modern mode, doubts the legitimacy of a particular narrative with the goal of replacing it with a better narrative; the second, postmodern mode, doubts the possibility of a better narrative, doubts the legitimacy of all narratives. Bauman then writes that "The second kind of doubt never for a single moment ceased to haunt modern mentality. From the start it was firmly entrenched in the inner recesses of modernity; fear of the 'unfoundedness' of certainty was, arguably, the most formidable of modernity's many inner demons" (22). In this thesis, then, the term postmodernism is used to indicate a mode of thought that has come to the forefront of philosophical thinking in the later twentieth century, but a mode of thought that has been available as a comment on and critique of modernism from its first articulation. Indeed, I would argue that the possibility for what we today call postmodern thought stretches back quite some distance before Descartes. Although it is a convenient fiction to locate the originary articulation of modernism in Descartes's "I think, therefore I am" (Discourse on Method 53), it is interesting to note that a more precise formulation of the conclusion of Descartes's project of doubt can be found over a millennium earlier in St. Augustine's "Even if I doubt, I am" (De libero arbitrio 114).

Modern and postmodern philosophies ground different aesthetics. Modernist aesthetics are caught up in what Madison calls modernism's "metaphysics of representation" (x), and attempt to subjectively order and/or transcend the chaotic external world through form, symbol, and/or myth. Postmodern aesthetics, as Bertens argues, "are governed by a radical epistemological and ontological doubt" (45) and abandon all claims to escape through art the historicity, instability, and chaotic multiplicity of 'reality.' Bertens write: "Whereas the Modernists sought to defend themselves against their own awareness of cosmic chaos, of the impossible fragility of any 'center' they might perceive, the Postmodernists have accepted chaos and live in fact in a certain intimacy with it" (45). In "Toward a Concept of Postmodernism," Ihab Hassan lists a series of terms in order to survey the differences between modernist and postmodernist aesthetics. Under modernism Hassan lists the following: "Romanticism/Symbolism," "Form (conjunctive, closed)," "Design," "Hierarchy," "Mastery/Logos," "Art Object/Finished Work," "Presence," "Centering," "Genre/Boundary," "Master Code," "Metaphysics" (280-281). These terms are opposed to the following terms placed under postmodernism: "'Pataphysics/Dadaism," "Antiform (disjunctive, open)," "Chance," "Anarchy," "Exhaustion/Silence," "Process/Performance/Happening," "Absence," "Dispersal," "Text/Intertext," "Idiolect," "Irony" (280-281). Although he admits that the dichotomies represented in his lists "remain insecure, equivocal" (281), Hassan argues that a general distinction between modernist and postmodernist aesthetics does emerge: roughly, modernist and postmodernist aesthetics are differentiated by each's differing assessment of the ontological potential of subjective structures, of form .

However, the relation between modernist aesthetics and the literature of the modern period (which Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane in "The Name and Nature of Modernism" locate "between 1890 and 1930" [52]), and between postmodernist aesthetics and literature post-1930, is not one of simple correspondence. Writers do not write to satisfy the literary historian's desire for tidiness in periodization. Hassan comments that

> We are all, I suspect, a little Victorian, Modern, and Postmodern, at once. And an author may, in his or her own lifetime, easily write both a modernist and postmodernist work. (Contrast Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man with his Finnegans Wake.) More generally, on a certain level of narrative abstraction, modernism itself may be rightly assimilated to romanticism, romanticism related to the enlightenment, the latter to the renaissance, and so back, if not to Olduvai Gorge, then certainly to ancient Greece. (277)

Modernist and postmodernist aesthetics cannot be considered to belong to consecutive, disjunctive literary periods; rather they represent different but temporally coexisting aesthetic possibilities.

This may suggest that the critic's task is simply to classify texts, to examine them and decide to which category of aesthetics, modernist or postmodernist, they belong. The situation is somewhat more complex, however. What does it mean to read as postmodern the fiction of Virginia Woolf, whose texts have been taken by numerous critics as representative of modernism[1]? Has an error in classification occurred? Would a postmodern reading of a modernist author be anachronistic? My answer to the last two questions is, of course, no. To accuse a reading of being anachronistic is to assume that a "natural" reading exists from which the anachronistic reading distortingly departs. Roland Barthes in "The Death of the Author" writes that the text is "the black-and-white where all identity is lost, beginning with that of the body that writes" (55). Indeed, "once the Author is distanced, the claim to 'decipher' a text becomes entirely futile. To assign an Author to a text is to impose a brake on it, to furnish it with a final signified, to close writing... but there is no end to [the text], no bottom; the space of writing is to be traversed, not pierced" (58). The text, then, is a signifying system with no single, unequivocal, inherently correct meaning, no "natural" interpretation. The modernist Woolf is as much a construction as the postmodernist Woolf. There is, then, no method of deciding which interpretation of Woolf's fiction is "correct," or into which slot in literary history we should definitely place Woolf.

However, as Madison argues, "the interpreter cannot, for all that, simply project his or her own meaning onto the text. It becomes perfectly reasonable to say that while no interpretation can ever be shown to be the 'correct' one, some interpretations are, nonetheless clearly better than others" (35). Madison names several criteria for evaluating interpretations, among which are the extent to which an interpretation deals adequately with the textual features themselves and the extent to which an interpretation is suggestive of further research. As Astradur Eysteinsson argues in The Concept of Modernism, many readings, based on New Critical aesthetics, of texts as modernist meet neither of these criteria, but are reductive and, in claiming to have found the text's single, "correct" interpretation, foreclose on further discussion. Eysteinsson comments that "many modernists have to a great extent shared the 'purist' views of formalists and New Critics, and have even forcefully uttered ahistorical notions about poetic autonomy in their essays and other commentaries. But nothing obliges us to take such views as adequately representative of their own work or of modernism in general" (12). In this thesis I read Woolf's texts as postmodern rather than modern because I feel that such a reading deals more adequately and more suggestively with the texts than do other interpretations. As Bill Martin points out in his article "To the Lighthouse and the Feminist Path to Postmodernity," "there is no need to read against the grain to find postmodern themes" (309) in Woolf's work. In this thesis, I deal with aspects of Woolf's texts that other readings, such as readings of Woolf's texts as modernist, have neglected, and with relations between aspects of Woolf's texts that other readings have left unexplored. The following survey of Woolf criticism serves to specify these aspects and relations in relation to the main issues raised by Woolf criticism.

Until recently, the works of Virginia Woolf have been considered to be the products of an ivory tower aesthete, a sexually frigid formalist who was little concerned with and had very little of importance to say about the world of politics, who failed to notice the first world war and committed suicide rather than face the problems of the second. No doubt this familiar portrait is in no small measure the result of Woolf's central position in the group that came to be known as Bloomsbury, and to be scorned by contemporaries such as D.H. Lawrence and F.R. Leavis. In The Common Pursuit, Leavis writes that the very nature of Bloomsbury mitigated against social activism: "to be inimical to the development of any real seriousness was its essence" (391). All that a serious writer such a Lawrence could perceive in Bloomsbury, Leavis claims, was "the levity of so many petty egos, each primed with conscious cleverness and hardened in self-approval" (394). That this portrait of Bloomsbury still persists is evidenced by Paul Johnson's comments in his recent A History of the Modern World. Johnson writes that Bloomsbury was afflicted with the "torpid dampness" of hedonistic irresponsibility symptomatic of a somnolent nation: "Like the shattered ranks of the old gentry, like the idle acres, like the dole-queues, Bloomsbury lacked the energizing principle" (170) necessary to revitalize England. In his biography of Woolf, Quentin Bell confirms the applicability of these charges against Bloomsbury to Woolf specifically. Bell characterizes Woolf as "a distressed gentlewoman caught in a tempest and making little effort either to fight against it or sail before it" whose political writings and activities "could serve no useful purpose" (Virginia Woolf 2:185). Bell writes: "She belonged, inescapably, to the Victorian world of

Empire, Class, and Privilege. Her gift was for the pursuit of shadows, for the ghostly whispers of the mind and for Pythian incomprehensibility, when what was needed was the swift and lucid phrase that could reach the ears of unemployed working men or trades Union officials" (2:186). Bell then supports this portrait with anecdotes describing the frustrating albeit humorous effects of Woolf's political ineptitude as secretary of the Rodmell Labour Group.

Bell's comments show how closely Woolf's aesthetics and politics have been linked: both politically and aesthetically, Woolf is purported to have withdrawn from the realm of important events in the external world into the abstract world of formalism and aestheticism. At its worst, this allows literary critics to dismiss her work as insignificant. When F.R. Leavis moves his attack from Bloomsbury and the group's political ethos to Woolf and her aesthetics, the underlying principles and the conclusions of his attack remain the same. Leavis writes that Woolf's aesthetics are the product of "a sensitive mind whose main interests are not endorsed by the predominant interests of the world it lives in, and whose talents and professional skill seem to have no real public importance" ("After To the Lighthouse" 295). Until recently, even sympathetic treatments of Woolf's work placed it within the private rather than public sphere. David Daiches concludes that Woolf "developed a type of fiction in which sensitive personal reactions to experience can be objectified and patterned in a manner that is both intellectually exciting and aesthetically satisfying" (Virginia Woolf 153). His comparison of Woolf's work with the Victorian novel presents Woolf's aesthetics in opposition to an aesthetics oriented toward the public sphere: "The Victorian novelist tended on the whole to produce a narrative art whose patterns were determined by a public sense of values. Virginia Woolf on the other hand, sensitive to the decay of public values in her time, preferred the more exacting task of patterning events in terms of her personal vision" (154). Three decades after Daiches' study, James Naremore argues along similar lines. Woolf's fiction does not address the world of public affairs in any serious way, but, on the surface, is merely a beautiful evocation of "her cultivated, slightly effete life among the *haute bourgeoise* of post-Edwardian England" (The World Without a Self 1). The value of Woolf's fiction lies in its expression of Woolf's peculiar desire to "overcome the space between things, to attain an absolute unity with the world, as if everything in the environment were turned to water" (242). It is this desire more than anything else, claims Naremore, that motivates Woolf's experimental aesthetics. Indeed, many critics have compared Woolf's aesthetics to the aesthetics of her friend Roger Fry, a post-Impressionist painter and art critic who in his essay "The Artist and Psycho-Analysis" defines works of art as "systems of formal relations" (288) divorced from reference to "reality" (288). Fry himself sanctions the comparison by extending this definition of art from the visual arts across the spectrum of artistic activity to include both musical compositions and literature.

The myth of the Bloomsberries, and Woolf in particular, as apolitical artists involved in an aesthetics of fragile formalism has proven hard to dispel from the critical imagination. Nonetheless, recent re-examinations of both Bloomsbury and

Woolf have called it into question. In his essay "The Bloomsbury Fraction," Raymond Williams writes that "nothing more easily contradicts the received image of Bloomsbury as withdrawn and languid aesthetes than the remarkable record of political and organizational involvement, between the wars, by Leonard Woolf, by Keynes, but also by others, including Virginia Woolf" (155). Woolf's political involvement is explored by Naomi Black in her essay "Virginia Woolf and the Women's Movement." Black points out that Woolf's extensive and lifelong involvement in various social organizations, both feminist and labour movements, placed her "squarely in the middle of the organizational network of social feminism in Britain" (184). Black's essay is part of a larger attempt, inaugurated in 1981 by New Feminist Essays, to resituate Woolf's fiction within the context of her social concerns. Jane Marcus, the editor of New Feminist Essays, in her essay "Thinking Back through Our Mothers," revisions Woolf as "a guerrilla fighter in a Victorian skirt" (1) whose intense anger at patriarchal and capitalist oppression motivated her aesthetics as well as her social activism. In her introduction to the essay collection, Marcus writes that Woolf "raided the patriarchy and trespassed on male territory, returning to share her spoils with other women: women's words, the feminine sentence, and finally the appropriate female form" (xiv). Woolf's feminism, of which her fiction was an expression, was an attempt, Marcus argues, to rediscover and reassert the "old matriarchal forms" ("Thinking Back" 2) of writing and living. The characterization of Woolf as an apolitical aesthete thus becomes a move by the patriarchal literary institutions to contain and suppress the potentially disruptive nature of Woolf's work.

Marcus and others have forced a necessary and valuable revaluation of Woolf's fiction in terms of its social criticism. However, the primarily biographical hermeneutics used by critics such as Marcus renders the results of such scholarship problematic from a postmodern feminist critical perspective. Postmodern theorists argue that the text is a multivocal system of signifiers whose totality cannot be contained within any one reading, and that the self is itself an equivocal, non-identical construct whose totality is never fully or non-contradictorily expressed in language. Marcus's biographical hermeneutics, based on the premise of a unified self expressing itself unequivocally in language, thus presents an image of Woolf as mythological and as reductive as the image of Woolf the ivory tower aesthete. More disturbing is the extent to which Marcus's criticism reproduces the patriarchal binaries against which it purports to work. In Sexual/Textual Politics, Toril Moi points out that any claim, such as Marcus's, to recover an essentially feminine word, sentence, form, or identity "runs the risk of becoming an inverted form of sexism... by uncritically taking over the very metaphysical categories set up by patriarchy in order to keep women in their places, despite attempts to attach new feminist values to these old categories" (13). In her review of Marcus's work, Bette London argues that such an inversion structures even the seemingly revolutionary overarching goal of Marcus's criticism, to establish Woolf as a central mother through whom women can establish a matriarchy and a matriarchal lineage of their own: "we must ask," London writes, "whether we can afford to perpetuate such genealogical thinking - thinking that reinscribes, from the distaff side, the structures of patriarchal authority" ("Guerrilla in Petticoats or Sans-Cullotte?" 18).

Critics of Woolf working within a postmodern paradigm do not reject Marcus's project in order to reinstate the image of Woolf the ivory tower aesthete. Rather, postmodern criticism of Woolf turns on a deconstruction of the binary opposition between the aesthetic and the political. Moi argues that her Kristevan approach to Woolf refuses to accept "this binary opposition of aesthetics on the one hand and politics on the other, locating the politics of Woolf's writing *precisely in her textual practice*" (16). By reading Woolf's fiction within the antifoundational problematics of postmodernism, critics can describe Woolf's supposedly purely formal modernist experimentalism in terms of a radical feminist politics: in terms of its exposition of the fictional and oppressive nature of patriarchal discourses on women, in terms of its disruption of the unified subject in general and in particular the subject positions patriarchal discourses provide, and in terms of its attempts to articulate alternatives to gendered discourse.

The postmodern marriage between aesthetics and politics is not an altogether happy one, however. The postmodern paradigm undermines as much as it enables social criticism. If there is no necessary correspondence between subjective constructs of the world and external reality, the world is a multiplicity of fictional constructs, and no fictional construct can be legitimated; truth is only a particular type of fiction, philosophy a peculiar genre of literature. Postmodernism's antifoundationalism can be liberating: the deconstruction of phallocentric discourses of the unified subject and the delegitimation of hegemonic grand narratives thus enabled by postmodernism's critique of the Kantian subject have been key instruments of a liberational politics of subversion. Nonetheless, as Waugh admits, postmodernism denotes an epistemological stance that eliminates the grounds for oppositional politics: "if all is fiction, how to say that one fiction is better than another, or one course of action more ethical than an alternative?" (9). As Lyotard points out in The Postmodern Condition, all grand narratives, even those of Marxism, are open to critique[2].

The ambivalence of the consequences for discourses of social criticism of postmodern theory has implications for Woolf criticism. Critics such as Marcus can argue that postmodern theory cannot do justice to Woolf the strident critic of society who penned the polemics Room of One's Own and Three Guineas. Both mount critiques of patriarchal and capitalist society by constructing narratives of history, both of patriarchy and of the matriarchal heritage suppressed by patriarchy. Both issue moral imperatives based on materialist and matriarchal narratives. It matters little that these narratives are fictions; they were and are, nonetheless, tools in the struggle for the political enpowerment of women and workers. Postmodern critics can merely shrug their shoulders and comment that there is no escape from the groundlessness of all discourse, that the only possible politics is one of textual subversion, and that Woolf's attempt to ground her social criticism in metanarratives is a function of the nostalgia for unity and transcendence implicit in her modernist aesthetics. Any examination of the relation between the aesthetics and politics of Woolf's texts within the problematics of postmodernism must in some way come to terms with this problem.

To sketch the approach to this problem that I will take through the rest of this thesis, I wish here to make two points. First, Woolf's aesthetics are more aware of the problematics of postmodernism, in both her polemics and her fiction, than either of the above caricatures allow. While it is impossible to reduce Woolf's aesthetics to a general system capable of being represented by a single instance, it is interesting to observe closely the passage most often cited as proof of the modernism of Woolf's aesthetics. In "A Sketch of the Past'" Woolf writes that "the whole world is a work of art; that we are the parts of the work of art. Hamlet or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music" (81). What seems to be a characteristically modernist attempt to find truth in an epiphanic moment, however, moves through Woolf's metaphors into an exposition of the fictionality of all such attempts: the truth, the real unity beneath the surface of phenomena, is a play or a musical composition - in short, a narrative construct. Also, in her literary criticism, Woolf shows the characteristically postmodern oscillation between a desire for form and and an aversion to the reductiveness of form. In her criticism of Dorothy Richardson's The Tunnel, Woolf finds fault with Richardson for not fashioning her "new material into something which has the shapeliness of the old accepted forms" ("'The Tunnel'" 12). However, in "Modern Fiction," Woolf proclaims the irreducibility of reality to narrative form: "The writer seems constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall, to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy... The tyrant is obeyed; the novel is done to a turn. But sometimes, more and more often as time goes by, we suspect a momentary doubt... Is life like this?" (149). Woolf's aesthetics, then, do not seem to accept the modernist, specifically symbolist, conjunction between subjective form and objective reality. Second, postmodern theory may not be as antithetical to social criticism as a Rortean postmodern pragmatics of ethical irresponsibility might imply. The problem is to think the possibilities for social criticism within the matrix of postmodern theory. The following pages explore several of the various attempts Woolf makes in her fiction to articulate some of these possibilities.

Before I summarize the arguments of each of the four chapters in this thesis, I need to comment briefly on the role Woolf's A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas play in the thesis's argument. In his book Virginia Woolf and the Real World, Alex Zwerdling warns against interpretation of Woolf's fiction that "reads [Woolf's] whole career through the lenses of Three Guineas" (33). Zwerdling's warning seems to me to be sound advice: just as one cannot formulate a general system of Woolf's aesthetics consistent throughout her fiction, likewise one cannot formulate a set of political beliefs consistently held to throughout Woolf's work and represented by A Room of One's Own or Three Guineas. Nonetheless, Woolf's polemics and her fiction are not entirely disconnected: in A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas Woolf explores directly the relationship that structures her social criticism in her fiction also, the link between self and society, between the supposedly separate private and public domains. Rather than seeking with analysts such as Keynes the roots of war and fascism in terms of the malfunction of general economic or historical systems, Woolf in Three Guineas argues that war and fascism are results of the types of subjectivities engendered by patriarchal discourse, that dictatorial patriarchal family organization is reflected in the dictatorial and conflict-oriented nature of European civilization. Woolf writes that "the public and the private worlds are inseparably connected; ... the tyrannies and servilities or the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other" (162). The recurring problem of war will not be solved by influencing economies to produce fewer guns and more butter, but by changing the structure of subjectivities and the institutions that produce them. In her fiction Woolf does not always make the same type of connection between self and society, nor does she always make as forcefully the connection made in Three Guineas. Nonetheless, self and society, the domestic oppression of women and war, are axes around which Woolf plots her social criticism throughout most of her fiction, and will be the focus of my exploration of Woolf's attempts to articulate a social criticism within the problematics of postmodernism.

The following four chapters will, then, attempt to come to terms with the politics of Woolf's fiction within the problematics of postmodernism. I am not arguing that Woolf was a postmodern social theorist, but that an interpretation of Woolf's texts in the terms of postmodern social theory comes to grips more adequately than other interpretations both with Woolf's critical ambivalence to the epistemological validity of narratives, and with the complexities of Woolf's texts themselves. Woolf's texts constantly interrogate the legitimacy of patriarchy's grand narratives. In the first of the following four chapters I engage Derridean and Althusserian discourses in order to set up the parameters and define the terms in which I discuss Woolf's fiction. In the second chapter I argue that Woolf in Jacob's Room writes Jacob's unauthorized biography. In so doing, Woolf deconstructs patriarchy's narrative of the unified, masculine subject, and articulates from patriarchy's margins alternative, non-hegemonic subjectivities. In the third chapter I argue that Woolf in To the Lighthouse exposes the destructive logic of patriarchy's attempt to legitimate by force Freud's Oedipal narrative, and explores the possibility of other, non-Oedipal and non-hegemonic, structures of desire. In the last chapter I examine Woolf's ethical thought in The Years in relation to the ethics of G. E. Moore. I argue that Woolf in the novel is concerned with the question "what is the good society?", and that Woolf's treatment of this question in the novel can be best understood in terms of a deconstruction of the ethics Moore presents in Principia Ethica.

Notes

1. Erich Auerbach's reading of Woolf's To the Lighthouse in Mimesis is a typical modernist reading of Woolf's fiction: To The Lighthouse, Auerbach argues, is representative of "the forms of order and interpretation which the modern writers here under discussion attempt to grasp in the random moment - not one order and one interpretation, but many, which may either be those of different persons or of the same person at different times; so that overlapping, complementing, and contradiction yield something that we might call a synthesized cosmic view" (549).

2. In The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Lyotard argues that both the traditional Marxist grand narrative of a universal subject (the proletariat) progressively realizing itself through a monological history and the Frankfurt school (primarily Habermas) grand narrative of the emancipation of humanity through consensus cannot find grounds for legitimation. To these narratives Lyotard opposes "the heterogeneity of the rules and the search for dissent" (66).

Chapter One: Derrida and Althusser

In my introduction I stated that this thesis was, generally speaking, an attempt to read the politics of Woolf's texts within the problematics of postmodernism. The problem posed by postmodern discourse is that of legitimation: since reason does not lead to certain knowledge, and since discourse cannot escape reason, how then can discourse be legitimated? The legitimation crisis presents special problems for discourses of social criticism. How can a social criticism be formulated that is not open to the charge that it is just another discourse, with no claim to legitimation and therefore no claim to any type of validity for its calls for social change? In this chapter I attempt to answer this question, to articulate a social criticism that is not rendered impotent by postmodernism's antifoundationalism, by bringing together Derridean and Althusserian discourses. My aim in writing this chapter has been twofold: to present a discussion of the problems and possibilities of social criticism in a postmodern world, that can stand by itself as a modest intervention in a debate that promises to go on for some time to come; and, more importantly, to set the parameters and define the terms of the ensuing discussion of Woolf's texts.

Given the extreme and seemingly exclusive textuality of Derrida's work, it may not be apparent that deconstruction is not merely a philosophical licence for creative misreadings. The connection between deconstruction and social struggle may seem remote. Indeed, Marxism and deconstruction been for the most part construed as antagonistic discourses. Frederic Jameson, in The Political Unconscious, asserts that to be in any sense a Marxist one must profess "that everything is 'in the last analysis' political'" (20), and that to do so "is already to announce a whole polemic program, which must necessarily come to terms with a critical and theoretical climate variously hostile" (21) to such a profession. Along with other "post-structuralist" (21) anti-Marxist belligerents, Jameson names Derrida and deconstruction. Jane Marcus, in her preface to Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant, constructs a similar opposition: "The material conditions of Woolf scholarship have determined that we learn other arts than deconstruction" (ix). Nonetheless, as Bill Martin argues in his book Matrix and Line, "there is a basis in Derrida for a kind of historical materialism, though one that takes as its first task 'the materialization of the signifier'" (310). Martin accomplishes this task and arrives at a Derridean historical materialism by following a complex path through Hegel and others. In "Differance," Derrida begins a shorter route through Saussure and Heidegger. Derrida argues that Saussure's insight that the signifier is both arbitrary and has meaning only within a network of differences calls into question metaphysical conceptions of language, conceptions of language that take the sign as token of and stabilized by an absent presence. The implications of this effect all signifieds, including concepts:

> the signified concept is never present in and of itself, in a sufficient presence that would refer to itself. Essentially and

> lawfully, every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences. Such a play, *differance*, is thus no longer a concept, but rather the possibility of conceptuality, of a conceptual process and system in general. (404)

All signifieds are signifiers, and all attempts to impose a transcendental signified, a metaphysical limit - such as God or the Logos - upon the free play of signification, are caught up in the play of differance at the moment of articulation. Thus, Derrida writes, "there has never been, never will be, a unique word, a master-name" (419). Derrida scrutinizes in particular the play of differance that undermines Heidegger's attempt to think the transcendental signified as Being. For Heidegger, it is only through the ontico-ontological distinction, the distinction between presence and present, Being and beings, that Being can be thought. Derrida argues that this distinction is subject to the play of differance, the play of the trace:

> The play of the trace which no longer belongs to the horizon of Being, but whose play transports and encloses the meaning of Being: the play of the trace, or the differance, which has no meaning and is not. Which does not belong. There is no maintaining, and no depth to, this bottomless chessboard on which Being is put into play. (414)

The very possibility of articulating Being as transcendental signified at all is at once the impossibility of imposing Being as transcendental signified as such; differance is older than Being. Whereas Heidegger construes the world as the informing of Being in beings, as the speech of the Logos, Derrida construes the world as a general text ruled by the non-concept of the non-transcendental differance, a text without bounds, without final determination.

A Derridean reading of Louis Althusser's work along lines analogous to Derrida's reading of Heidegger enables the politicization of the general text. In part three of For Marx, Althusser is concerned with the reductive results of a simple appropriation and inversion of the Hegelian dialectic by contemporary Marxists. Rather than account for the extent to which the Hegelian dialectic is inseparable from Hegelian metaphysics, these Marxists merely substitute one metaphysical entity for another: for Hegel, the dialectic describes the coming to consciousness of a simple Spirit through history, and all events and contradictions are merely phenomena in a self-contained logical system; the reductive Marxist merely substitutes the economy for the Spirit, and so constructs a materialist metaphysics in which all events and contradictions are phenomena in the economy's logical movement through history. Althusser argues that in order for the Marxist dialectic to regain explanatory power in the face of events that do not fit the inverted Hegelian paradigm, such as the Russian revolution in 1917 or the failure the revolution in industrially advanced nations, the "rational kernel" of the Hegelian dialectic must be separated from its "mystical shell" (93):

> If, [as in the instance of the Russian revolution], a vast accumulation of

> 'contradictions' comes into play *in the same court*, some of which are radically heterogeneous - of different origins, different senses, different *levels* and *points* of application - but which nevertheless 'merge' into a ruptural unity, we can no longer talk of the sole, unique power of the general 'contradiction'... This means that if the 'differences' that constitute each of the instances in play... '*merge*' into a real unity they are not '*dissipated*' as pure *phenomena* in the internal unity of a *simple* contradiction. (100)

Althusser thus problematizes attempts to locate a single, simple cause for historical events and social formations. History is "overdetermined in its principle" (101): events are exterior to the contingent intersection of different economies that locate them. However, perhaps in an effort to retain Marxism as a science rather than as one hermeneutic strategy among many possible, Althusser attempts to contain the effects of his deconstruction of metaphysical Marxism by reintroducing, at the last instant, the economy as transcendental signified: while Althusser argues for "the relative autonomy of the superstructures and their specific effectivity," he asserts "determination in the last instance by the (economic) mode of production" (111). In their deconstructive reading of Althusser in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Laclau and Mouffe delineate the possibilities in Althusser's critique of metaphysical Marxism once the transcendental signified of the economy is removed:

> The most profound *potential* meaning of Althusser's statement that

> everything existing in the social is overdetermined, is the assertion that the social constitutes itself as a symbolic order. The symbolic - i.e., overdetermined - character of social relations therefore implies that they lack an ultimate literality which would reduce them to necessary moments of an immanent law. (97)

A deconstructive reading of Althusser thus construes the area of social struggle - the modes and relations of production, the state and other ideological apparatuses, the national and international circumstances - not as (economic) presence but as text, a text in which deconstructive strategies can intervene.

The decontruction of Althusser and the consequent opening of a space for deconstructive intervention in the text of social struggle may not at first glance seem to be of any help for social theory, eliminating the possibility for the articulation of a positive social theory that might be the ground of a political praxis. However, in his essay "No Apocalypse, Not Now," Derrida points the way to a deconstructive praxis through an examination of the sinister aspect of the transcendental signified in the text of social struggle, and its ultimately (im)possible materialization as referent in "the nameless war in the name of the name" (31), nuclear war. The transcendental signified ("the name") in the social text is constituted by the unlegitimated bounds of legitimation and power in social discourse and practice, the unquestioned term - capital, man, imperialism - to which all other terms refer and by which the play of differance is constrained into a series of binary oppositions constituting the channels of meaning and power.

This allows a more specific conjunction of Derridean and Althusserian discourses. The materialization of the transcendental signified can be construed as the mechanization of the social text: the social formation becomes a machine[1] whose goal is to reproduce and extend its own boundaries at any expense, a machine that wages war in the name of the transcendental signified, the name of the name, of nothing, everything, anything - X. Capitalism is one such machine. In The Postmodern Condition, Lyotard argues that the ethos of the capitalist machine is purely technical: the ethical standard of the machine "[pertains] not to the true, the just, or the beautiful, etc., but to efficiency" (44). Lyotard then assesses the human cost of the war the capitalist machine wages in the name of profit. From the point of view of the capitalist system,

> the needs of the underprivileged should not be used as a system regulator as a matter of principle: since the means of satisfying them is already known, their actual satisfaction will not improve the system's performance, but only increase its expenditures... In this sense, the system seems to be a vanguard machine dragging humanity after it, dehumanizing it in order to rehumanize it at a different level of normative capacity. (63)

Althusser's powerful analysis in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" of the role of the state and other ideological institutions in the social text, in terms of the dominant social formation's drive to reproduce itself, works further toward this machine's anatomization. Nonetheless, Althusser's analysis of the machine still privileges the mode of production: Althusser "[assumes] that every social formation arises from a dominant mode of production" ("Ideology" 124). A deconstructive reading of Althusser opens the possibility of extending the concept of the machine to other economies governed by transcendental signifieds, such as patriarchy and imperialism. The apocalyptic function of the transcendental signified within the logic of the machine becomes apparent as Derrida describes the limit case - nuclear war - of that logic:

> nuclear war - as a hypothesis, a phantasm, of total self-destruction - can only come about in the name of that which is worth more than life, that which, giving its value to life, has greater value than life. Thus it is always waged in the name of .... That, in any case, is the story that the war-makers always tell. But as it is in the name of something whose name, in this logic of total destruction, can no longer be borne, transmitted, inherited by anything living, that name in the name of which war would take place would be the name of nothing, it would be the pure name, the 'naked name.' ("No Apocalypse" 30)

The situation of the subject within the machine is of central importance to Althusser's project. The subject is the site of the struggle for "the ideological hegemony indispensable to the reproduction of capitalist relations of production" ("Ideology" 139) and so to the reproduction of the capitalist machine as a whole: "there is no ideology except for concrete subjects, and this destination for ideology is only made possible by the subject: meaning, *by the category of the subject* and its functioning" ("Ideology" 160). Nonetheless, there are no subjects before or outside of ideology: "*the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects*" ("Ideology" 160). Within the bounds of his discourse, however, Althusser has difficulty theorizing resistance to interpellation of individuals into specific subject positions: since ideology is determined in the last instance by the economic base, it remains, like all other levels of social formation, a superstructure; consequently subjectivity is always subjected to the class that hegemonically asserts its interests through the ideological state apparatuses. "*There are no subjects except by and for their subjection*" ("Ideology" 169), writes Althusser. This is, of course, not to say that Althusser did not recognize the need for the possibility of resistance. As Catherine Belsey hints, however, Althusser's difficulty in theorizing resistance is symptomatic of his ambivalence toward the status of the economic base - signifier or signified? Belsey writes: "Althusser never succeeded in theorising to his own satisfaction the status of Marxism itself as not merely another ideology, this time of the working-class, but a science" ("Agents of Utopia" 19). Deconstruction offers the subject no escape into a science from the social text in which the subject is constructed. Derrida argues that "the subject (in its identity with itself, or eventually in its consciousness of its identity with itself, its self-consciousness) is inscribed in language, is a 'function' of language" ("Differance" 408) The consequence of this, Bill Martin argues, is that "subjectivity exists in a social matrix" (Matrix and Line 13). The subject's articulation is always already ideological. This seems to be a return to the Althusserian problematic, but with one crucial difference. The deconstructive turn on Althusser frees the social text from the constraints of the economic transcendental signified and so enables the theorization of the subject as the site of radical indeterminacy and consequently of potential resistance to the logic of the machine. Interpellation (Althusser's famous "'Hey you there!'" ["Ideology" 163] in which the voice speaks the ideological lie determined by the economic Logos) is always misheard, misread; the subject is the site of the contingent intersection of many inscriptions in many different contexts, contaminating pure subjectivity with ambiguity, parody, even opposition.

Thus can be perceived the general outlines of a deconstructive praxis: the movement to defy and defer the war of the name through a politics of what Bill Martin labels "radical diversity/ radical confluence" (Matrix and Line 19). Fully aware of the ultimate trajectory of the logic of the machine, a deconstructive politics works toward the liberation of the play of differance in the social text, the deconstruction of the transcendental signified and the social formation it structures. Martin argues that the points from which a deconstructive praxis launches its attack on the machine are the subject positions that the machine has marginalized: by recognizing the validity of the knowledges of marginal subjects (each subject position different from the others, yet sharing a common relation to the machine), a politics of radical diversity/ radical confluence deconstructs the supplemental position assigned these subjects and knowledges by the machine, and rewrites the social text to reinscribe the transcendental signified in the play of differance. Martin writes: "The wealth of marginalized historical experience that marginal subjects bring to jaded society is the key to breaking the deadlock of historical stasis" (Matrix and Line 56), the key to halting the unchanging and single-minded pursuit of the reproduction of the logic of the Same in the social formation.

The representation of reality in fictional texts is one of the processes in which the machine attempts to reproduce its logic. As Astradur Eysteinsson points out in The Concept of Modernism, in texts whose goal is to reproduce the machine's version of "reality" (in Althusser's terms, its "ideology"), the transcendental signified becomes the hermeneutic key by which the fictional text codes reality as an "unbroken, totalized world" (203). Consequently, the formal strategies by which some texts disrupt the codes of realistic representation have political implications: they return the machine's attempts to reproduce its totalizing logic to the play of textual differance. Two of the formal strategies Woolf exploits to defy and defer the war of the name are: the fragmentation of plot, and the use of decentered, multiple points of view. In "Beyond Determinism: George Eliot and Virginia Woolf," Gillian Beer observes that "Woolf's books reject plot. Plot insists on origins, sequence, consequences, discovery, exclusion and closure" (94). The deterministic type of plot to which Beers refers insists on a single cause, a key, to which the effects that unfold in the narrative are traceable, and by which they are interpreted. Woolf's rejection of plot is thus a refusal to order her texts according to the logic of a transcendental signified, specifically the Darwinian logic of both physical and social evolution that so heavily influenced and reinforced patriarchal Victorian views of reality. In "Virginia Woolf and the Female Perspective," Virginia Blain comments on the political implications of Woolf's manipulation of narrative perspective: "an unspoken assumption among readers is that the Victorian omniscient narrator is a male persona; female omniscience, in a patriarchal society with an androcentric religion, is a contradiction in terms. Under the conditions of this male-dominated tradition which Virginia Woolf inherit, to adopt the all-knowing voice of omniscient narration was, in effect, to adopt a thoroughly masculine tone" (119) and so reproduce the dominant, patriarchal version of reality. Woolf's use of multiple and decentered narrative perspectives in her fiction works against this hegemony. In Jacob's Room, Woolf's fragmentation of plot and manipulation of narrative perspective work against the traditional *Bildungsroman*'s representation of reality as ordered around the unified, masculine subject. Woolf reinscribes the masculine subject to the play of differance by narrating Jacob's life from the margins, by writing Jacob's unauthorized biography.

Notes

1. As will become apparent as my argument progresses, I am using the machine as a metaphor for a social formation that attempts to impose a transcendental signified upon the general social text. Just as a machine defines the space and time within it, and subjugates its parts to an end beyond question, so a machine-like social formation defines the space and time within the bounds of its power in order to subjugate its parts to its end - it schematizes life within a particular logic. I am obviously not the first to coin this metaphor, but I have used it because it seemed particularly well suited to my argument. Two instances (at least) of the metaphor's use that were not mentioned in the body of the chapter are similar enough to warrant mention here. Deleuze and Guattari use the metaphor extensively in Anti-Oedipus. Their definition of the desiring-machine is worth quoting: "desiring-machines are binary machines, obeying a binary law or set of rules governing associations" (5). Woolf herself, in "A Sketch of the Past," uses the metaphor: "What, I asked myself, when I read Herbert Fisher's autobiography the other day, would Herbert have been without Winchester, New College and the Cabinet? What would have been his shape had he not been stamped and moulded by that great patriarchal machine?" (167).

Chapter Two: Jacob's Room

Immediately upon publication in 1922, Jacob's Room was recognized to be a masterpiece of formal experimentation. In October 1922 Lytton Strachey wrote to Woolf about the novel: "the technique of the narrative is astonishing - how you manage to leave out everything that's dreary, and yet retain enough string for your pearls I can hardly understand" (Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage 93). The novel's political aspect, however, has only recently received critical attention. Recent critics have recognized that in Jacob's Room Woolf develops a penetrating critique of English society before the First World War. Many of the same critics, however, have only given qualified approval to the novel's social criticism. In Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject, Minow-Pinkey writes that the novel's social criticism is limited by its suppression of its feminism: the novel's critique of English patriarchal society and patriarchy's complicity in the destruction of the war is only "latently present in Jacob's Room itself. A proto-feminist hostility emerges at innumerable moments in the novel and yet never becomes a fully focused theme. The marginal objections remain dissociated from one another, never cohere into a global critique" (46). Although he does not specifically mention Jacob's Room, another critic who gives only qualified approval to Woolf's, and by implication the novel's, social criticism is Raymond Williams. In his essay "The Bloomsbury Fraction," Williams argues that the members of Bloomsbury, among whom Woolf was one, were limited in their social criticism by their unproblematic construction of the subject as the "civilized individual" (165) independent of institutional constraint. The resulting split between the public and private spheres precluded, according to Williams, any examination of the ways in which institutions produce the subject and consequently any revolutionary intention to create new institutions and new subject positions. According to Minow-Pinkey and Williams, then, the social criticism in Jacob's Room is limited by both its repressed feminism and its secular humanism.

These limits, however, are constructed by arguments that ignore or elide aspects of Woolf's fiction. Minow-Pinkey's argument, valuable as it is, does not consider the extent to which the novel's fragmentation of narrative structure, which undermines the formation of a "global critique," might be a response to a literary tradition permeated with patriarchal values expressed through totalizing and appropriating narrative structures. Throughout her writing, Woolf resists the hegemony of critical as well as patriarchal narratives as she works toward new, non-appropriative forms of biography and history. Williams's argument, ironically, discovers Bloomsbury's "philosophy of the sovereignty of the civilized individual" (165) in the works of the group's male members, and so elides Woolf's own thought while attributing to her a philosophy she did not share. In Three Guineas Woolf explicitly connects institutions and the production of the subject, and argues that in order for war to cease, new subject positions must be created through radical institutional change. Having exposed the complicity of England's educational institutions in the production of young men who are willing, even eager, to be cannon fodder, Woolf recommends the following: "Take this guinea and with it burn the college to the ground. Set fire to the old hypocrisies. Let the light of the burning buildings scare the nightingales and incarnadine the willows. And let the daughters of educated men dance round the fire and heap armful upon armful of dead leaves upon the flames" (42). Jacob's Room, even though fiction rather than polemic, demonstrates a similar awareness of the interrelations between private and public, the self and institutions. In the novel, Woolf uses narrative technique to develop a critique of prewar English society founded upon a critique of the institutional and discursive production of the subject at its most private level, that of gender.

In Jacob's Room, Woolf manipulates narrative perspective to examine the extent to which the construction of the subject is constrained by patriarchal discourse. In Sexual/Textual Politics, Toril Moi writes that, from the Judeo-Christian articulation of God as Father to Freud's construction of the Oedipus complex around the privileged phallus, patriarchal discourse has placed women on the margins of the symbolic order: "femininity is defined as lack, negativity, absence of meaning, irrationality, chaos, darkness - in short, as non-Being" (166). In the patriarchal discourse, men occupy the position of the present, unified, and superior subject who constructs women as other, as absence, fragmented multiplicity, and inferiority. As the novel's narrative occupies the perspectives of the various women on the margins of Jacob's life, the constraints of the subject positions provided by patriarchal discourse for women are explored.

Mrs. Jarvis provides an example of how the subject positions patriarchy constructs for women constrain the way in which women who occupy these subject positions perceive themselves in relation to men and society. Mrs. Jarvis observes the widowed Betty Flanders in church and thinks "marriage is a fortress and widows stray solitary in the open fields, picking up stones, gleaning a few golden straws, lonely, unprotected, poor creatures" (5). Betty Flanders is narrated in terms of her lack of a man to circumscribe her within his own being, to protect her, to provide her with a stable identity; without a man, Betty and all women are wandering fragments unable to attain the wholeness that would give them the right to be called human. The fortress metaphor used here echoes one of Woolf's earlier works, "The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn." In this work we are presented with a young woman of the landed class in fifteenth century England. Joan is conscious that her confinement within the "great gates" (252) of her father's hall is necessary if she is to have an identity within patriarchal society. Outside the hall lurk forces that threaten to rob her of her virginity, which is the currency, the contract of submission, with which she will purchase an identity. Without it she cannot marry and will remain without an identity: "No other event in the life of a woman can mean so great a change; for from flitting shadow like and unconsidered in her father's house, marriage suddenly pours her to a substantial body, with weight people must see & make way for" (257). Joan's perception of herself and her place in society is structured by the binary opposition that structures all patriarchal discourse: she is a "shadow" to be defined by the substance of her husband.

The subject position patriarchy constructs for women also position women as subordinate in relations of authority and erotic desire. As Captain Barfoot visits Mrs. Flander for tea, the narrator explores the construction of Captain Barfoot as a commanding moral absolute: "He was a man with a temper; tenacious, faithful. Women would have felt, 'Here is law. Here is order. Therefore we must cherish this man. He is on the bridge at night'" (25). Captain Barfoot, as the incarnation of patriarchal order, embodies a moral unity which commands obedience through which women can participate in morality: women must cherish him. Captain Barfoot's temper is thus excusable as the wrath of a righteous God. As Jacob is narrated from the perspective of the various women who are in love with him, the narrator explores the ways in which the subject positions patriarchy constructs for women constrain the women who occupy them to construct the male as the embodiment of an ideal love whose wholeness defines while compensating for the poverty of feminine love. The narrative enters the thoughts of Helen Askew, who comments that Jacob and Dick Graves "seemed heroes to her, and the friendship between them so much more beautiful than women's friendships" (108). Jacob's love exists on an ideal plane inaccessible to women by themselves. Clara Durrant also perceives Jacob in this way: Jacob "is so unworldly" (68). Fanny Elmer's construction of Jacob perhaps most clearly illustrates the construction of the male as ideal presence in erotic relationships. Fanny constructs Jacob in terms of

Classical sculpture: "Fanny's idea of Jacob was... statuesque, noble, and eyeless" (166). Fanny perceives Jacob as the unity of the ideal and the material, word and flesh; the eyelessness of her mental image of Jacob is indicative of the divinity that she confers on him. For Fanny, Jacob is a presence that sustains her and supplies her lack while remaining self-contained and indifferent to her. While Jacob wanders in Greece, Fanny visits the statue of Ulysses in the British Museum to obtain "a fresh shock of Jacob's presence, enough to last her half a day" (166). Fanny constructs Jacob as the erotic presence to which she subordinates her erotic desires.

Woolf's narrator does not limit herself to working within the subject positions patriarchy constucts for women, but moves within the consciousness of the novel's male characters in order to examine the construction of women by men who occupy the subject position patriarchy constructs for men. Men occupy the position of the defining subject which redeems women from non-Being by constructing them as objects to be mastered by masculine desire. The masculine subject is Descartes' *cogito*, the transcendental and autonomous subjectivity of the Enlightenment whose Being is thought and whose task is to subdue the chaos of nature and supernature to the order of the *Logos*. Women, who are not man, not one, not *Logos*, thus signify the materiality, either natural or supernatural, on the horizons of the masculine. Moi argues that this significance fundamentally determines the construction of subject positions for women by the discourse of the masculine: "It is this position that has enabled male culture sometimes to vilify women as representing darkness and chaos, to view them as Lilith or the Whore of Babylon, and sometimes to elevate them as the representatives of a higher and purer nature, to venerate them as Virgins and Mothers of God" (167). These two constructions of the feminine, the Whore and the Virgin, present a challenge to the masculine subject who, in his quest to reduce matter to thought, objectifies and imposes control on women and the chaos they represent. The constructions of women are thus transformed: the Whore is unseated from her dragon and objectified as a commodity to be bought for a set price in a defined space, the brothel; the Virgin is domesticated, confined to a shrine as a manageable intermediary between man and his God. This transformation is characteristic of the Enlightenment project of progressively ordering reality, a project that can be thought of, as Albert Borgmann points out, "as the conjunction of Bacon's, Descartes's and Locke's projects, as the fusion of the domination of nature with the primacy of method and the sovereignty of the individual" (Crossing the Postmodern Divide 25). In short, pre-Enlightenment myths representing the fears of man are transformed by the progressive rationality of the Enlightened masculine subject.

In the novel, men order the chaos women represent by constructing them as aesthetic and sexual objects. As the masculine subject constructs women as aesthetic objects, he becomes a creating god who manifests his ideas in the women he objectifies. Narratives of men's aesthetic objectification of women permeate the novel, beginning with the novel's opening narrative sequence, in which Mrs.

Flanders is translated into daubs of paint as part of Charles Steele's landscape painting. Steele hopes his painting will one day earn him a place beside Titian in the history of art, a narrative in which history is expressed as the manifestation of the ideal in the material. The masculine construction of women as media for the manifestation of masculine ideas becomes explicit as Fanny Elmer sits for the painter Nick Bramham. Fanny is merely the medium through which Nick experiences an aesthetic epiphany: "if you talk of a beautiful woman you mean only something flying fast which for a second uses the eyes, lips or cheeks of Fanny Elmer, for example, to glow through" (112). The women used by Beauty are excluded from experiencing their use, and remain material: Nick rather than Fanny pronounces judgment upon Nick's painting. "'By God, it's bad,' said Bramham" (112), invoking the source of phallocentric authority to legitimate his judgment.

As the masculine subject constructs women as sexual objects, he becomes the consumer of a packaged product. Chaotic sexuality is ordered by a technology of desire whose law is that of supply and demand. In these terms, there is no difference between marriage and prostitution: both the patriarchal home and the brothel are factories that supply the same product to meet the same demand. In the novel, Woolf's narrator explores the patriarchal ordering of sexuality by entering Jacob's consciousness as he constructs Florinda and Laurette, the two prostitutes whom he uses. It is apparent from the contexts in which Jacob uses the terms 'fidelity' and 'respectability' that Jacob considers the construction of women as sexual objects to be legitimate. Looking at Florinda, Jacob thinks "Great men are truthful, and these little prostitutes, staring in the fire, taking out a powder-puff, decorating lips at an inch of looking glass, have (so Jacob thought) an inviolable fidelity" (91). Jacob construes Florinda's fidelity not in a moral sense, not in terms of her adherence to an absolute moral standard (he is aware she is a prostitute), but in a functional sense, in terms of her loyalty to her trade - she is a little prostitute satisfying a great man. A similar meaning is conveyed when Laurette's apartment in the brothel is called "a most respectable room" (101).

One of the more notable things about the technology of desire is the extent to which it packages sexual objects in order to hide the physical nature of the sexual act. The narrator comments that Florinda and prostitutes in general "have solved the question by turning it into a trifle of washing the hands nightly before going to bed, the only difficulty being whether you prefer your water hot or cold, which being settled, the mind can go about its business unassailed" (76). Sexuality is reduced to its functional level in order to contain it and so avoid speaking about it in other than elliptical terms if at all. The masculine subject is repulsed by the raw materiality of sexuality; raw sexuality threatens its rational control over the world of nature. Consequently, sexuality is reduced to a function in the larger patriarchal logic of life, and "the mind can go about its business unassailed" (76). Sexuality is constantly hidden behind other discourses whose worlds are worlds of thought rather than physical worlds: "What with Shakespeare and Adonais, Mozart and Bishop Berkeley - choose whom you like - the fact is concealed and the evenings for the most of us pass reputably, or with only the sort of tremor that a snake makes sliding through the grass" (76).

Jacob attempts to package Florinda as an aesthetic object: "Wild and frail and beautiful she looked, and thus the women of the Greeks were, Jacob thought" (75). When, however, Jacob perceives Florinda as "horribly brainless" (78), he cannot maintain this illusion; confronted with "indecency... in the raw" (79), Jacob "had a violent reversion toward male society, cloistered rooms, and the works of the classics" (79). Jacob's encounters with Laurette are much more successful. His demands have been anticipated, and Laurette has been groomed accordingly. The product has been precisely packaged, its price set, and its limits defined. Laurette is a beautiful and intelligent woman whose manners and polite conversation obscure the fact that Jacob has used her as a sexual object. The price is an exact amount, and for this price Jacob buys a strictly measured product. Jacob attempts to arrange a meeting with Laurette outside the brothel, but she declines and subtly reminds Jacob that her time must be purchased: "she got up gracefully, calmly. Jacob got up. She smiled at him. As she shut the door he put so many shillings on the mantelpiece" (101).

The narrative in Jacob's Room is not limited to speaking from within the subject positions provided by patriarchal discourse. In her diary Woolf writes of the novel that "I have found how to begin (at 40) to say something in my own voice" (AWD 71). The narrator of the novel likewise speaks with her own voice. She is still spatially and discursively on the margins of patriarchy, but she speaks not as the compliant subject of patriarchal interpellation but as Marcuse's "rebellious subjectivity" (The Aesthetic Dimension 7) who is aware that patriarchal discourse is what Althusser labels an "illusion" ("Ideology" 153), a reduction of reality that masks the tyranny of its imposition. The formation of the rebellious subject is rendered inevitable by the internal logic of patriarchal ideology, which is seamless and consistent only at its imaginary center. The marginal subject positions into which women are interpellated are non-contradictory only when viewed from the patriarchal center as functions of masculine desire: thus, Jacob without difficulty reconciles the Whore with the Virgin in both Florinda and Laurette. When viewed from the margins, however, these subject positions are irreconcilable, and those who are forced to occupy them live in a condition of controlled schizophrenia, an experience that brings with it a profound awareness of the divided and constructed nature of all subjectivity. The schizophrenic experience creates the preconditions for the interrogation of and explosion of the illusion of the unity and ideality of the masculine subject, the illusion that holds together the logic of patriarchy's discourses of gender. From her position on the margins, the narrator in Jacob's Room is aware of the displaced material repressed of patriarchal ideology. Materiality is reintroduced into the center of the patriarchal discourses of gender as the term in which these discourses need to be "'interpreted' to discover the reality of the world behind their imaginary representation of that world" ("Ideology" 153). From her reflected and resisting position on the margins, Woolf's narrator excavates what can be termed the material unconscious of patriarchal discourse, the material conditions (both the physical body and its desires, and the raw power channelled by institutions) of the production of patriarchal subjectivities.

Much like the Freudian excavation of the unconscious, Woolf's narrator's excavation of the materiality of patriarchal ideology exposes as fragile and dependent what was proclaimed to be omnipotent and autonomous. In her description of the British Museum, the narrator, unlike either Fanny Elmer or Jacob, perceives the extent to which the survival of eternal and great ideas is dependent on finite and humble material beings:

> The vast mind was sheeted with stone: and each compartment in the depths of it was safe and dry. The night-watchmen, flashing their lanterns over the backs of Plato and Shakespeare, saw that on the twenty-second of February neither flame, rat, nor burglar was going to violate these treasures - poor, highly respectable men, with wives and families at Kentish town, do their best for twenty years to protect Plato and Shakespeare, and then are buried at Highgate. (105)

In her narration of Jacob's love affair with Sandra Williams, the narrator takes her reintroduction of the material a step further. She reveals that the idea, and the transcendental subject whose Being is supposedly ideal, are not merely dependent upon but perhaps even epiphenomena of the material. Consequently, the ideal causal logic by which patriarchal discourse constructs its interpretations of history may be other than real. Jacob forms the opinion that Sandra is "brainless" (143), but decides nonetheless to go to Athens to admire the intellectual achievements of the Athenians. The central motivating role Jacob ascribes to his intellect in this instance is, however, subverted by the narrator: "'I shall go to Athens all the same,' he resolved, looking very set, with his hook dragging in his side" (143). A caught fish, Jacob is dragged to Athens by a desire for Sandra beyond the control of his conscious intentions.

Unlike the Freudian unconscious, however, the material unconscious is structured for the most part to maintain patriarchal ideology's illusion of reality. Patriarchal power structures the material economy of society in such a way that patriarchal discourse appears to provide the only valid social hermeneutic - i.e. in such a way that, even if causes are in reality other than what patriarchy claims them to be, effects still coincide to produce the illusion of truth. Thus, Jacob may be correct when he asserts that Florinda is "brainless" (78), not because all women are unintelligent but because Florinda has been excluded from the educational process from which Jacob has benefitted. In "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf describes this complex of power and discourse as "the great patriarchal machine" (167). Woolf writes that "Every one of our male relatives was shot into that machine at the age of ten and emerged at sixty a Headmaster, an Admiral, a Cabinet Minister, or the Warden of a college. It is as impossible to think of them as natural human beings as it is to think of a carthorse galloping wild maned and unshod over the pampas" (167). The patriarchal machine compartmentalizes power within its system. What is functional within the machine is not so much the occupant of a particular compartment as the compartment occupied. It is not the horse, but the cart, that determines the subject's identity and function. With this in mind, the significance of Jacob's room becomes clear. The patriarchal illusion in which Jacob lives and thinks is sustained by the material space and power provided for him by the patriarchal machine. Jacob can occupy the position of the transcendental subject not because of his intelligence but because the patriarchal machine has relieved him from the necessity of thinking about materiality and has provided him with a tradition of thought - Carlyle and Spinoza - that expresses history in terms of the will of great men and the world in terms of an immanent God. This tradition masks Jacob's insignificance as an individual within patriarchy while assuring Jacob's complicity in the reproduction of the patriarchal division of real power in society. The irrelevance of the individual is fully confirmed by Clara Durrant's confinement within the domestic space of her mother's house. Clara has a "flawless mind" (119) but her position within the patriarchal machine destines her to the task of "eternally pouring out tea for old men in white waistcoats" (119).

The novel is concerned not just with revealing the patriarchal machine behind patriarchy's idealist illusion, but also with examining the tragic consequences for both men and women of incorporation into the patriarchal machine. The novel's primary narrative focus is on Jacob, and it is through Jacob that the narrator examines the consequences for men. For men, the fundamental consequence at the level of self is a lack of self-awareness. The position of the transcendental subject posits a unity that precludes the necessarily schizophrenic dialogue of self-awareness. Indeed, one of Jacob's primary characteristics is that he is "profoundly unconscious" (12). Jacob is the "satisfied [and] masterly... inheritor" (42) of "old buildings and time" (42), a tradition which establishes for him an identity that he does not question and in confidence of which he sleeps. The narrator comments: "'What for? What for?' Jacob never asked himself any such questions, to judge by the way he laced his boots; shaved himself; to judge by the depth of his sleep that night... He was young - a man... credulous as yet" (157). Jacob's lack of self-awareness is manifested in the terms in which he conceptualizes history. For Jacob, "the flesh and blood of the future depends entirely upon six young men" (103), of whom Jacob was one, and upon their revolutionary acts of throwing "Mr. Masefield," "Mr. Bennett," "The Victorians," and "the living" "into the flame of Marlowe and [burning] them to cinders" (103). For Jacob, unlike Tamburlaine perhaps, history progresses at the level of the idea. To fully foreground Jacob's ignorance of materiality, the narrator juxtaposes Jacob's version of history with that of Julia Hedge, whose feminist arguments depend upon statistics and an examination of the harsh physical conditions of the working environment: "death and gall and bitter dust [are] on her pen-tip" (103) as Julia Hedge writes. Even Jacob's rebelliousness is limited by his lack of self-awareness, and so is recuperated by the patriarchal machine. Jacob's revolt from the world of his elders is predicated on "the obstinate irrepressible conviction... 'I am what I am, and intend to be it'" (33). Jacob expresses his rebellion in terms of the unity of his subjectivity, a unity that can only be maintained within the patriarchal illusion. Consequently, Jacob reaffirms his imprisonment within the patriarchal machine at the very moment he thinks he is rebelling against it.

Incorporation into the patriarchal machine requires that men's desires be regulated to ensure the machine's forward progress. The "strokes which oar the world forward" (152) are dealt by men whose desires have been effectively subordinated to their functions:

> they are dealt by men as smoothly sculptured as the impassive policeman at Ludgate circus. But you will observe that... his face is stiff from force of will, and lean from the effort of keeping it so. When his right arm rises, all the force in his veins flows straight from shoulder to finger-tips; not an ounce is diverted into sudden impulses, sentimental regrets, wire-drawn distinctions. The buses punctually stop. (152)

The sculpting necessary for the creation of such men is done through the system of education they must go through to attain their posts. Men are taught to submit their desires to an intellectuality organized around obedience to the *Logos*, the voice of patriarchal authority. The narrator shows us this process at work at a Cambridge graduation service in King's College Chapel: "Look, as they pass into service, how airily the gowns blow out, as though nothing dense and corporeal were within. What sculpted faces, what certainty, authority controlled by piety, although great boots march under gowns. In what orderly procession they advance" (29). These young men have banished materiality in the name of the Father; they have been suitably fashioned and are ready to assume their places in the world as agents of the Law. This repression of materiality in the name of the Law creates the necessary preconditions for war: having been taught to forget their bodies in obedience to authority, men eagerly undertake the epic adventure of war to which they have been commanded. And inevitably the patriarchal machine produces war: it perceives other nations as part of the chaotic Other to be subdued. In Virginia Woolf and the Real World, Alex Zwerdling comments that "the machinery that would have assured [Jacob] a place in Who's Who sends him off to war instead" (74). The war proceeds, like the traffic in London, like clockwork:

> The battleships ray out over the North Sea, keeping their stations accurately apart. At a given signal all the guns are trained on a target which (the master gunner counts the seconds, watch in hand - at the sixth he looks up) flames into splinters. With equal nonchalance, a dozen young men in the prime of life descend with composed faces into the depths of the sea; and there impassively (though with perfect mastery of machinery) suffocate uncomplainingly together. (151)

The survivors of the war's horrific battles are "fragments of a broken matchstick" (152), scattered and charred gears and levers.

Thus, from her position on the margins, the narrator of Jacob's Room writes the material unconscious of patriarchal ideology back into the history of prewar English society, and illustrates what in Three Guineas Woolf would articulate with a polemical accent: "the public and the private worlds are inseparably connected... the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other" (162). The gendered construction of the subject and the horrors of the war are products of the same patriarchal machine. By shifting in and out of the consciousnesses of the various women on the margins of Jacob's short life, the narrator writes Jacob's unauthorized biography. As does the narrator in Flush, the narrator in Jacob's Room writes Jacob's life from the perspective of those who see things, such as altars, differently. A difference in perspective might be taken to imply a difference of epistemological validity: the women through whom Jacob is narrated, such as Mrs. Papworth, whose ability to "faithfully report an argument" (98) is doubtful, produce spurious, unreliable narratives, whereas an authentic, reliable narrative would have been produced had the narrator worked through Jacob's consciousness. This, however, is not the case. Jacob, caught as he is in patriarchy's illusion, is no more reliable as a narrator than Mrs. Papworth, perhaps even less so. What the narrative in Jacob's Room lacks is not epistemological reliability but authorization. The narrative lacks what Jacob's own narrative would not have lacked: the imprimatur of patriarchal power.

There is nonetheless a structural difference between the two perspectives, between the gaze of patriarchal discourse and the perspective constructed by the narrator. Patriarchal discourse looks to appropriate: the relation it constructs between observer and observed is that of subject and object. Jacob adopts this deadly gaze early in his life, when he begins to hunt and categorize butterflies:

"the upper wings of the moth which Jacob held were undoubtedly marked with kidney-shaped spots of a fulvous hue. But there was no crescent upon the underwing" (21). Jacob's gaze objectifies the butterfly without any regard for the life that has just been snuffed out. Jacob's only concern is with the realm of ordered ideas - Morris's book on butterflies - into which the dead moth affords him entrance. T.S. Eliot describes in similar terms the dehumanizing effects of the objectifying gaze upon that which is objectified:

> The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase
> And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
> When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
> Then how should I begin
> To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways? (Collected Poems 15)

In contrast, the relation constructed by the novel's narrator is intersubjective, a relation of communication between subject and subject. This relation does not present a totalizing vision of the other, a "formulated phrase" that would reduce the other completely to one's own terms. Rather, it provides glimpses through the interstices of all the narratives one possesses about the other, interstices that can exist only if one does not make one's narratives totalizing, only if one admits the limited validity of one's own point of view. This mode of non-appropriative communication is motivated by and facilitates love. The recognition "that a profound, impartial, and absolutely just opinion of our fellow creatures is utterly unknown" (69), that we glimpse another person and "the moment after we know nothing about him" (69), is "the manner of our seeing... the conditions of our love" (69). This perspective often coincides with the maternal perspective, a perspective marginalized by patriarchy. In her essay "Private Brother, Public World," Sara Ruddick writes that "Woolf feminises the perspective from which she reveals Jacob's life and the history of which it is a part. Jacob is shown to us both under the aspect of eternity and under the aspect of maternal care; his life is framed by the hopes, work, vision, and losses of his mother" (197). At the novel's end, when Betty Flanders asks what should be done with Jacob's shoes, the narrator has already implied the answer: throw them away so that others will not be forced to occupy them; war is the only place to which they lead.

In Jacob's Room, then, Woolf neither represses her feminism nor fails to scrutinize the material production of the subject. In the novel, Woolf's fragmentation of form, her abandonment of a unifying narrative point of view that might have lead to a global critique, is part of Woolf's strategy to write Jacob's life from points of view marginalized by patriarchy. In so doing, Woolf excavates the material unconscious of patriarchal discourse, exposing the raw power behind patriarchal illusions and revealing the destructive consequences of patriarchy's exercise of that power, both for the women whom patriarchy tyrannizes and for the men whom it sacrifices in its wars. The novel's formal experimentation is not motivated merely by Woolf's desire to pare down the novel form to its essentials, but also by the desire to expose "the masculine point of view" ("Mark on the

Wall" 48) for what it is, so that it "will be laughed into the dustbin" ("Mark on the Wall" 48).

Chapter Three: To the Lighthouse

Upon the publication of To the Lighthouse in 1927 Woolf went through her usual anxiety about the novel's critical reception: "Think the whole thing may be pronounced soft, shallow, insipid, sentimental" (D 3: 134) she comments in her diary. Woolf need not have been worried, however. Even her arch-foe Arnold Bennett found himself forced to forego his usual condemnation of Woolf's fiction and admit that the novel "has stuff in it strong enough to withstand quite a lot of adverse criticism" (Virginia Woolf: the Critical Heritage 201). Of all Woolf's novels, perhaps, To the Lighthouse has won the largest critical consensus as a masterpiece of English literature. Nonetheless, this consensus draws together widely differing critical approaches to the novel. Many critics, from Joan Bennett to S.P. Rosenbaum, have positively evaluated the text according to the New Critical paradigm of the organic and autonomous work of art[1]. Other critics have reacted against the New Critical approach, arguing that by reducing the novel to an exercise in formalism this approach misses the text's engagement with a broad spectrum of political issues. In her essay "Where the Spear Plants Grew: the Ramsay's Marriage in To the Lighthouse," Jane Lilienfeld argues that the novel critically examines the oppression of women within the structure of the Victorian marriage[2]. James Haule, in an essay examining the successive revisions of the "Time Passes" section of the novel, and Alex Zwerdling both argue that To the

Lighthouse is a profound reaction to and analysis of the first world war[3]. Read from within the problematics of postmodernism, however, the politics of the novel appear more complex than simply an attack against the violence of Victorian marriage or the horrors of the first world war: the novel works against the movement that generates these problems, phallogocentric society's movement toward what Derrida writes "the war in the name of the name" ("No Apocalypse, Not Now" 31). The guiding thread of this postmodern reading is taken from Gayatri Spivak's essay "Unmaking and Making in To the Lighthouse." In her essay, Spivak reads the novel as an allegory of reading, "as the story of Mr. Ramsay (philosopher-theorist) and Lily (artist-practitioner) around Mrs. Ramsay (text)" (310). The materiality of the signifier implied in Spivak's reading is central to my argument. However, rather than argue that To the Lighthouse privileges one particular reading of the signifier (Mrs. Ramsay) over the other, as does Spivak, I will argue that the text avoids imposing a transcendental signified, avoids halting the signifier's dissemination. The politics of To the Lighthouse turns on the Derridean metaphor of world as text: by asserting the materiality of the signifier and the (im)possibility of the transcendental signified, Woolf's text constitutes a deconstructive praxis directed toward defying and deferring the war of the name.

The war of the name with which Woolf in To the Lighthouse is specifically concerned is the imperialism of the phallus in the economy of desire. In To The Lighthouse, Woolf deconstructs the vehicle of this imperialism, the Freudian Oedipal narrative. The reader at this point may object that I have conflated my own theories with Woolf's: Woolf did not read Freud, the reader may claim, until the 1930's, and certainly could not have read even the earliest of Derrida's works. On what grounds, then, can I claim that Woolf deconstructs Freud's Oedipal narrative? First of all, even if Woolf had not read Freud until after To The Lighthouse, she had been surrounded, well before the Hogarth Press in 1924 began its publication of the works of Freud and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, by people who were deeply involved with Freud and psychoanalysis. In Downhill All the Way, Leonard writes that the Hogarth Press's publication of Freud's works in fact was a result of the intensity of Bloomsbury's already existing interest in Freud: "It came about in the following way. In the decade before 1924 in the so-called Bloomsbury circle there was great interest in Freud and psycho-analysis, and the interest was extremely serious" (164). Adrian and Karin Stephen, and James and Alix Strachey, gave up other occupations to become professional psychoanalysts. These people did not keep their ideas to themselves, and, as James Strachey observes in a letter to Alix, Woolf did not hesitate to join in the discussions: "Last night I dined with the Woolves, the other guest being Dadie. Virginia made a more than unusually ferocious onslaught upon psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts" (Bloomsbury/ Freud 264). Furthermore, there is evidence to show that Woolf had read at least some of Freud before writing To The Lighthouse. In one of her letters Woolf does indicate that she did not just package the works of Freud that the Hogarth Press was publishing, but that she also read them: "We are publishing all Dr. Freud," Woolf writes to Molly MacCarthy in 1924, "and I glance at the proof and read how Mr. A. B. threw a bottle of red on to the sheets of his marriage bed to excuse his impotence to the housemaid, but threw it in the wrong place and unhinged his wife's mind" (L 3: 134). In Virginia Woolf and Psychoanalysis, Elizabeth Abel suggests that Woolf is referring in this letter to Lecture 17 of Freud's Introductory Lectures (18). A psychoanalytic reading of To The Lighthouse, then, is not without grounding in Woolf's own reading. Even so, as is apparent from Strachey's letter, Woolf was not entirely sympathetic with Freudian ideas. She considered them to be reductive. In "Freudian Fiction," Woolf's review of J.D. Beresford's novel An Imperfect Mother, Woolf articulates her ambivalence: "We must protest that we do not wish to debar Mr Beresford from making use of any key that seems to him to fit the human mind. Our complaint is rather that in An Imperfect Mother the new key is a patent key that opens every door. It simplifies rather than complicates, detracts rather than enriches" (E 3: 197). Woolf's contention with Freudian narratives focuses on the same point as deconstruction's contention with logocentric discourse in general: the reductive imposition of a transcendental signified, a 'key'. My deconstructive and psychoanalytic reading of To the Lighthouse, then, is grounded in not only Woolf's knowledge of psychoanalysis but also in her objections to it.

Of course, no reconstruction of an author's thoughts can be more than an uncertain attempt; even if certainty could be attained, the relation between the author's thoughts and the text would remain unexplored. It seems productive then, to take a different approach to the issue. It is reasonable to assume that, within

Bloomsbury, the novel was read in the context of psychoanalysis, and that Woolf was aware that it would be read within this context. Her first reader, Leonard, called the novel "'a psychological poem'" (D 3: 123). My deconstructive and psychoanalytic reading of the novel, then, has some validity at least as an exploration of an interpretative tradition. More importantly, however, it seems to me that a deconstructive and psychoanalytical approach to To the Lighthouse is able to grapple with and make sense of the complexities of the text itself, more adequately than other approaches to the text. As Bill Martin in his article "To the Lighthouse and the Feminist Path to Postmodernity" observes, "there is no need to read against the grain to find postmodern themes in To the Lighthouse. Instead it is more a matter of fleshing, rather than flushing, these themes out" (309).

My argument that Woolf in To the Lighthouse deconstructs phallocentric imperialism in the economy of desire, is, then, not an attempt to turn through hermeneutic alchemy an early twentieth century novelist into a late twentieth century theorist, but an attempt to describe the complexities of Woolf's treatment of desire. In the text, Woolf reveals the destructive logic of the phallocentric machine's movement in the economy of desire: phallocentrism's hegemonic fantasies can never be attained - the real is untotalizable, differance always circumscribes the transcendental signified; thus the phallocentric machine escalates its violence to catch what can only be caught through total destruction, through the war in the name of the phallus. Woolf moves to defer this war of the phallic name by attacking the machine from the marginal positions occupied by Mrs. Ramsay, Lily Briscoe, and others. Articulating from the margins reintroduces values and modes of knowledge suppressed by the phallic machine, and so reintroduces the play of differance into the social text and loosens phallocentrism's hegemonic and insane grip.

In his essay "Freud and Lacan," Althusser works to incorporate pyschoanalytic theory within the framework of his Marxist discourse. The subject positions provided by the Oedipal, phallocentric drama of the family romance must be taken into any account of the machine's drive to reproduce. Althusser argues that these subject positions are the first ones into which the concrete individual is interpellated, and perhaps the most general: "the Oedipus complex is the dramatic structure, the 'theatrical machine' imposed by the Law of Culture on every involuntary, conscripted candidate to humanity" (198). Like all wars waged to impose a transcendental signified, the war of the phallic machine in the human psyche is not without violence: it is a "war which is continually declared in each of [humanity's] sons, who, projected, deformed, and rejected, are required, each by himself in solitude and against death, to take the long forced march which makes mammiferous larvae into human children, *masculine* or *feminine subjects*" (190). Much like Althusser, Woolf is concerned with the efficacy of the Freudian developmental narrative in the social text, and in the relationships between Mr. Ramsay, James, Cam, Lily Briscoe and Mrs. Ramsay, she explores this discourse through its several moments. Freud's Oedipal narrative has two moments. The first moment, the Oedipus complex, forms through the imposition of the Father's 'no' upon the shared desires between mother and son; consequently, Freud writes, the boy "desires his mother and would like to get rid of his father as being a rival" (New Introductory Lectures 163). The son refuses to submit to the father's domination, and conflict for possession of the mother ensues. The second moment, the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, is effected through the threat of castration: "Under the impression of the danger of losing his penis, the Oedipus complex is abandoned, repressed, and, in most normal cases, entirely destroyed... and a severe super-ego is set up as its heir" (New Introductory Lectures 163). The son, under threat of destruction, submits to the father's domination, identifies with the father, and so gains access to the order of culture and the Law, the order of the super-ego. According to Freud, the son's initial identification with and submission to the father expands to identification with and submission to authority figures in general: "the role of the father is carried on by teachers and others in authority; their injunctions and prohibitions remain powerful in the ego ideal and continue, in the form of conscience, to exercise moral censorship" ("The Ego and the Id" 643). The dissolution of the Oedipus complex through submission to the father places the son as subject within the hierarchy of the phallocentric Law. However, the subject position thus provided for the son is not only that of subject but also of dominator: the son is beneath the father, but sits at the father's right hand, is the father by identification. Through submission to the father the son becomes qualified to exercise power in the father's name.

Woolf examines the first moment of the Oedipal narrative in "The Window," the first part of the novel. The novel opens with James and Mrs. Ramsay sharing and nourishing James's desire to go to the lighthouse the following day: "'Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow,' said Mrs. Ramsay. 'But you'll have to be up with the lark,' she added" (5). Mr. Ramsay, however, shatters this dream (refutes a lie, he would put it): "'But,' said his father, stopping in front of the drawing-room window, 'it won't be fine.'" (6). Mr. Ramsay asserts his 'no' which signifies the truth: "what he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth" (6). James's violent reaction expresses his refusal to accept Mr. Ramsay's domination: "Had there been an axe handy, a poker, or any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him, there and then, James would have seized it" (6). In the conflict for possession of Mrs. Ramsay, James is impotent before his father. Mr. Ramsay interrupts James and Mrs. Ramsay at the window a second time, and asserts the priority of his desire, inexorably imposing upon Mrs. Ramsay his demands for sympathy without regard for either Mrs. Ramsay or James: "She laughed, she knitted. Standing between her knees, very stiff, James felt all her strength flaring up to be drunk and quenched by the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of the male, which smote mercilessly, again and again, demanding sympathy" (44). Here, the dominating father violently asserts his power to possess the mother and to cut off, to castrate the son.

James resolves his Oedipus complex in the novel's third part, "The Lighthouse." As James and Cam travel with Mr. Ramsay to the lighthouse, they "vowed, in silence, as they walked, to stand by each other and carry out the great compact - to resist tyranny to the death" (185). James is still actively engaged in his Oedipal conflict with his father. Nonetheless, the structure of the conflict has prepared James for eventual identification with his father. The position of dominating subject asserting his law upon the dominated object is the position of the father to which the son aspires, and the position from which James structures his relationship with Cam: "James the lawgiver, with the tablets of eternal wisdom laid open on his knee (his hand on the tiller had become symbolical to her), said, Resist him. Fight him. He said so rightly; justly. For they must fight tyranny to the death, she thought" (191). Thus, the obstruction to James's identification with his father and his submission to the hierarchy of the Law is not the structure of his subject position but the object which brings these two phallocentric subjects into opposition - in short, the mother. Abel argues that James's repression of his mother facilitates his identification with his father: "Having 'ceased to think' about his mother, James can proceed to his destination and complete his identification with his father" (52). This occurs while James anxiously waits for the wind to pick up and set the boat again on its course to the lighthouse:

> Yes, thought James, while the boat slapped and dawdled there in the hot sun; there was a waste of snow and rock very lonely and austere; and there he had come to feel, quite often lately, when his father said something which surprised the others, were two pairs of footprints only; his own and his father's. They alone knew each other. What then was this terror, this hatred? (209)

Having repressed the mother, James then receives "what [he] had been wanting" (234) - his father's word of approval: "'Well Done!'" (234). Mr. Ramsay has evaluated James and found him capable of behaving according to his standards; James is thus incorporated into the hierarchy of the Law not merely as subject, but also as one who wields power in the name of the father. In this way, the Oedipal machine successfully colonizes new territory, continually reproducing its phallocentric organization in the minds of concrete individuals: James becomes Mr. Ramsay.

For David Daiches, the reconciliation between James and Mr. Ramsay is the comic ending to a potential tragedy, a full restoration of harmony. Daiches writes that James's "grudge entered into his subconscious to be finally exorcised only when, ten years later, they arrive at the lighthouse and Mr. Ramsay turns and compliments James on his steering of the boat" (Virginia Woolf 81). Louise DeSalvo argues that interpretations of the reconciliation such as Daiches's are naive, and fail to consider the extent of the violence that preceded the reconciliation: "to believe that one compliment can eradicate a lifetime of poor parenting is wishful thinking" (Virginia Woolf: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on Her Life and Work 278). What Daiches assumes, and what DeSalvo calls into question, is the possibility of a complete and harmonious identification between father and son, a totalization of the self by the Oedipal subject position into which both James and Mr. Ramsay are interpellated. Althusser argues against the possibility of any such interpellation, an interpellation that would not leave scars or a remainder. Interpellation's victory is not bloodless, and subjects "are the *never forgetful witnesses*, and very often the victims, of this victory, bearing in their most hidden, i.e., in their most clamorous parts, the wounds, weaknesses and stiffnesses that result from this struggle" ("Freud and Lacan" 189). For Althusser, this wound is the space of the unconscious, the infinite space beyond conscious totalization. In Derridean terms, it is the space of differance. The machine can never fully appropriate this space, is always circumscribed by it, and needs to constantly exert force to maintain its own integrity, to prevent itself from dissolving back into the play of differance. The subject positions of the Oedipal machine are no exception: never able to totally colonize the psyche, they need constantly and violently to reinforce their interpellation.

In the novel, Woolf examines the brutal, bizarre, and even grotesque ways in which this violent need asserts itself. Charles Tansley is one of the more notable examples. His desire to occupy a dominating place in the social hierarchy is constantly undermined by his consciousness of his working-class background, his origin in a dominated class. Tansley thus feels it necessary to constantly be saying "'I-I-I'" (122). Tansley's disease becomes apparent at Mrs. Ramsay's dinner table:

> He felt extremely, even physically, uncomfortable. He wanted somebody to give him the chance of asserting himself. He wanted it so urgently that he fidgeted in his chair, looked at this person, then at that person, tried to break into their talk, opened his mouth and shut it again. They were talking about the fishing industry. Why did no one ask him

> his opinion? What did they know about the fishing industry? (104)

The more conscious Tansley becomes of his humble origins, the more violent become his fantasies of self-assertion: after recounting to himself that "his grandfather was a fisherman; his father a chemist; that he had worked his way up entirely himself" (105), Tansley scowls and and thinks "he could almost pity these mild cultivated people, who would be blown sky high, like bales of wool and barrels of apples, one of these days by the gunpowder that was in him" (106).

Mr. Ramsay likewise has difficulty maintaining his Oedipal self-identity. He is always worried about his dominant position as a philosopher, and always concerned that no one will read his books in ten years time. To maintain Oedipal self-identity, Mr. Ramsay regularly requires "sacrifices" (20), young men who will accept his intellectual domination and can be "shed" (20) when Mr. Ramsay desires to assert himself. Ironically, Tansley becomes Mr. Ramsay's latest offering. More telling of Mr. Ramsay's inability to assimilate himself completely into the subject position into which the Oedipal narrative interpellates him are his recurring fantasies of such assimilation accompanied by his regression to pre-Oedipal relations (i.e. the child's relation to its mother in which the mother as breast is construed as presence) with Mrs. Ramsay. Mr. Ramsay's desire to dominate manifests itself within the field of philosophical discourse in terms of reaching Z, the transcendental signified that encloses and completes all other knowledge and so is the key to absolute knowledge. To reach Z is to attain godhood: "After Q there are a number of letters the last of which is scarcely visible to mortal eyes, but glimmers red in the distance" (40). Z, however, is impossible to attain, and Mr. Ramsay finds himself still a mortal, still stuck at Q. Mr. Ramsay translates this failure into heroic terms:

> Feelings that would not have disgraced a leader who, now that the snow has begun to fall and the mountain-top is covered in mist, knows that he must lay himself down and die before morning comes, stole upon him, paling the colour of his eyes, giving him, even in the two minutes of his turn on the terrace, the bleached look of withered old age. Yet he would not die lying down; he would find some crag of rock, and there, his eyes fixed on the storm, trying to the end to pierce the darkness, he would dies standing. He would never reach R. (41)

To dominate or to be dominated, absolute power or absolute annihilation, are the extremes to which the logic of the Oedipal machine pushes Mr. Ramsay; either way he is assimilated.

Nonetheless, Mr. Ramsay's annihilation in the name of Z remains a fantasy: Mr. Ramsay, frozen on the mountain-top, "perceives by some pricking in his toes that he lives, and does not on the whole object to live" (43). The Oedipal machine cannot totalize Mr. Ramsay's desires. Mr. Ramsay's desire for life outside the Oedipal machine places him in a pre-Oedipal relationship with Mrs. Ramsay. The Oedipal and the pre-Oedipal uneasily coexist in Mr. Ramsay's relationship with Mrs. Ramsay, the latter relationship supplementing the former. Mr. Ramsay returns from his failed heroic quest to Mrs. Ramsay to reconstruct his self-identity:

"It was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, warmed and soothed, to have his senses restored to him, his barrenness made fertile" (44). Mr. Ramsay returns to have his Oedipal identity affirmed - he is a genius, he dominates Mrs. Ramsay; but he also returns to nourish the life-affirming and polymorphous desires his Oedipal identity forces him to repress - desires, however, that are necessary if Mr. Ramsay is to continue his quest for Z, for total Oedipal identity. Thus, during the interaction between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. Ramsay is both "the egotistical man [who] plunged and smote" (45) and "a child who drops off satisfied... with humble gratitude" (45). Mr. Ramsay's attempt to reestablish his identity necessarily reinscribes the supplemental term which leads to the identity's inevitable deconstruction and to the incessant repetition of the attempt. In her book Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations, Rachel Bowlby argues that "Mr. Ramsay's demands for reassurance of his uniqueness are doomed to be endlessly repeated" (69). The movement of deconstruction and reinscription of identity regulates the motion of the Oedipal machine as it pursues its (im)possible end of completely colonizing the psyche. There is nothing in To the Lighthouse that would suggest that James is the exception and has escaped this movement, nothing to suggest that his initiation into the order of the Father constitutes a 'final exorcism' of ghost of the pre-Oedipal mother.

For the feminine subject, the violence of the Oedipal machine's interpellation results from not merely the violence of interpellation in general but from the position into which the feminine subject is placed by the Oedipal narrative. In the Oedipal narrative, the development of the feminine subject is derivative, a deviation from normal, masculine development. According to Freud, a little girl's development is predicated on her lack of a penis, the fact that she is not male. An inversion of the normal developmental pattern occurs: the castration complex precedes the Oedipus complex, which consequently is never fully resolved. Freud argues that the little girl's love "was directed to her phallic mother" (New Introductory Lectures 160). The little girl's castration complex begins when she realizes that both she and her mother do not have a penis: little girls "feel seriously wronged, often declare that they want to 'have something like it too', and fall a victim to 'envy for the penis'" (New Introductory Lectures 159). The castration complex then precipitates the little girl's change of object of affections and the accompanying movement into the Oedipus complex: "The wish with which the girl turns to her father is no doubt originally the wish for the penis which her mother had refused her and which she now expects from her father" (New Introductory Lectures 162). Once object of affection, the mother now becomes rival for the father's penis. This inverted Oedipus complex is not completely symmetrical, however: whereas the father's 'no' spoke the threat of punishment to quell the son's desire to dethrone the father, and so facilitated the son's entry into the symbolic through the formation of the super-ego, the mother's 'no' possesses no authority, the feminine Oedipus complex continues indefinitely, and super-ego formation and the ability to function in the symbolic consequent upon super-ego formation is weak. Freud writes: "Girls remain in [the Oedipus complex] for an indeterminate length of time; they demolish it late and, even so, incompletely. In these circumstances the formation of the super-ego must suffer; it cannot attain the strength and independence which give it its cultural significance" (New Introductory Lectures 163). For Freud, the little girl's phallic lack translates into the lack of moral competence and thus a lack of power; not able to completely identify with the father, she is not able to wield the discourse of the law in his name, and consequently remains merely the dominated and supplemental subject of his discourse.

Woolf explores the violence of the Oedipal interpellation of the feminine subject through both Cam and Mrs. Ramsay. Cam is reduced to utter passivity by such interpellation. As a child, Cam is propelled by her desire into motion "like a bird, bullet or arrow" (63). Ten years later, as James resolves his Oedipus complex through the action of sailing the boat to the lighthouse, she sits silently and drowsily in the boat's middle. Caught between James and Mr. Ramsay, Cam's desire is at once structured and silenced by her position relative to the phallus. On the one hand, Cam desires to submit to her father's seduction. "I will make her smile at me" (190) thinks Mr. Ramsay, and so asks Cam about her puppy. Cam wants to respond: "She would answer him; she wished, passionately, to move some obstacle that lay upon her tongue and to say, Oh yes, Frisk. I'll call him Frisk" (192). On the other hand, "James the Lawgiver, with the tablets of eternal wisdom laid open on his knee... said, Resist him. Fight him" (191). Cam's relationship with her father is not unequivocal: "even now she woke in the night trembling with rage and remembered some command of his; some insolence: 'Do this', 'Do that', his dominance: his 'Submit to me'" (193). However, there is no question of Cam mediating her own solution to her ambivalent feelings toward her father or asserting her own authority in this battle - she must take sides, her decision must come under the aegis of the father one way or another. Cam's position as the feminine Oedipal subject permits neither the complete opposition to the father nor the complete identification with the father that follows, and so denies her independent authority in the symbolic order. The question that occupies Cam is not what she wants to do, nor even on whose side she wants to be, but to whom she should submit: "Her brother was most god-like, her father most suppliant. And to which did she yield, she thought" (191). Thus, Cam is silenced, denied access to the symbolic through which she might express her own desires: "Try as she might, she could think of nothing to say like that, fierce and loyal to the compact, yet passing on to her father, unsuspected by James, a private token of the love she felt for him" (192). Unable to articulate her own desires, Cam silently turns her thoughts to suicide, the final escape from her subjection: "So she said nothing, but looked doggedly and sadly at the shore, wrapped in its mantle of peace; as if the people there had fallen asleep, she thought; were free like smoke, free to come and go like ghosts. They have no suffering there, she thought" (193).

The position of the feminine subject in the Oedipal narrative is complicated by the transformation of the little girl into a mother. Abel comments that "presumed to be totally fulfilling, yet nevertheless a substitute, the son transforms [the feminine subject] from the subject of desire in one narrative to its object in another" (8). The feminine subject in its relations with pre-Oedipal subjects signifies presence. Nonetheless, according to Freud, as long as the pre-Oedipal is construed as a phase on the journey to the Oedipal, the child as signifier still finds its final meaning and identity in the penis as signified, and the plenitude of the feminine subject is recuperated into the plenitude of the phallus. However, the Oedipal machine never totally wins the war in the name of the phallus; the covert, supplemental coexistence of pre-Oedipal relations in the construction of the masculine Oedipal subject disrupts the linearity of Freud's recuperative logic. Consequently, the mother is called upon to occupy at once the disjunctive positions of presence and lack in her relation to the masculine Oedipal subject. This disjunction is apparent in Mrs. Ramsay's relations to Mr. Ramsay. On the one hand, Mrs. Ramsay's relation to her husband is structured around her phallic lack. Mrs. Ramsay's phallic lack renders her morally incompetent and consequently subject to her husband's moral authority. According to Mr. Ramsay, the "folly of women" (37) in general renders inadequate the moral education the Ramsay children receive from their mother, the primary care-giver in the Ramsay family; the children's moral education needs to be completed and corrected by the active intervention of the father. For this reason Mr. Ramsay feels forced to put his foot down about speculation on the possibility of a trip to the lighthouse: "He had ridden through the valley of death, had shattered and shivered; and now she flew in the face of facts, made his children hope what was utterly out of the question, in effect, told lies. He stamped his foot on the stone step" (37). In the face of Mr. Ramsay's phallic authority, Mrs. Ramsay is silenced: "without replying, dazed and blinded, she bent her head as if to let the pelt of jagged hail, the drench of dirty water, bespatter her unrebuked. There was nothing to be said" (38). Yet the evening's interchange does not halt here. To sustain his Oedipal subject position, Mr. Ramsay needs to satisfy his pre-Oedipal desires. Having interpellated Mrs. Ramsay as lack, Mr. Ramsay returns to the window and interpellates her as presence. Knowing her husband is demanding sympathy from her, Mrs. Ramsay "[pours] erect into the air a rain of energy, a column of spray... and into this delicious fecundity, this fountain and spray of life, the fatal sterility of the male plunged itself" (44). The effect of this plenitude on Mrs. Ramsay is not, however, an affirmation of identity, but rather an "exhaustion" (45) of self: "boasting of her capacity to surround and protect, there was scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by; all was so lavished and spent" (45). Not able to eliminate the pre-Oedipal from the masculine Oedipal identity, the Oedipal machine mines the pre-Oedipal plenitude of the feminine Oedipal subject, extracting what it needs without giving anything in return.

Although Althusser clearly argues that the Oedipus complex is institutionally mediated, in his exploratory essay he avoids addressing two related issues. The exact status of the Oedipal developmental narrative is not clear: is it an historically mediated universal structure, as some of his statements already quoted seem to imply? Is resistance possible to this structure which forms a part of the dominant class's interpellative machine? In the novel, Woolf addresses both questions. Freud's theorization of the Oedipus complex as a universal structure depends on construing the narrative's phallic origins and trajectory to be transcendentally fixed (anchored outside of narrative in a realm of eternal truth). However, the very method of discovering these fixed points - the exploration of memory through patients' narrative accounts of their childhood - calls into question their transcendental nature. E.M. Forster writes that origins and destinations can only be points of narrative speculation: "We move between two darknesses" (Aspects of the Novel 55). Woolf likewise focuses on the narrative production of these two points of darkness. Through James's development, Woolf shows that the Oedipal narrative is not a universal structure, but rather constructed through an interpellatively constrained rewriting of the text of memory. James's development is not strictly linear, but proceeds, while James is navigating the boat to the lighthouse, through a series of recollections and rewritings of his relationships to his parents. James's anger toward his father prompts him to search through his memory for a moment he can claim to be the originating and determining moment of his anger:

> Turning back among the many leaves which the past had folded in him, peering into the heart of that forest where light and shade so chequer each other that all shape is distorted, and one blunders, now with the sun in one's eyes, now with a dark shadow, he sought an

> image to cool and detach and round off his feelings in a concrete shape. (210)

James then uncovers the memory of his father's interruption of his pre-Oedipal relationship with his mother: "Something, he remembered, stayed and darkened over him; would not move; something flourished up in the air, something arid and sharp descended even there, like a blade, a scimitar, smiting... 'It will rain,' he remembered his father saying. 'You won't be able to go to the Lighthouse'" (211). After uncovering this moment, James begins to explore his pre-Oedipal relationship with his mother: "He began following her from room to room... She alone spoke the truth; to her alone could he speak it. That was the source of her everlasting attraction to him, perhaps; she was a person to whom one could say what came into one's head" (212). In this relationship, James and his mother are together without the father; the mother is presence, the source of truth, a truth that is produced through communion. James undertakes this exploration, however, covertly in an attempt to avoid the shadow his father would cast across the pages of his memory: "At any moment Mr. Ramsay (James scarcely dared look at him) might rouse himself... but for the moment he was reading, so that James stealthily, as if he were stealing downstairs on bare feet, afraid of waking a watchdog by a creaking board, went on thinking what was she like, where did she go that day?" (212). The shadow of Mr. Ramsay is the shadow of phallic authority, the 'no' demanding identification with the father and repression of the memory of the mother. James cannot avoid the shadow: "all the time he was thinking of her, he was conscious of his father following his thought, shadowing it, making it shiver and falter... At last he ceased to think" (213). The shadow of phallic authority forces James to repress the text of his relationship with his mother and to rewrite the text of his relationship with his father in accordance with phallocentric metaphysics. Oedipal sources of truth replace pre-Oedipal. Rather than as an obstruction to his access to the maternal source of truth, James now perceives Mr. Ramsay as the incarnation of a truth predicated on the mother's absence: "[Mr. Ramsay] looked, James thought,... like some old stone lying on the sand; he looked as if he had become physically what was always at the back of both their minds - that loneliness which was for both of them the truth about things" (230). The entry into the realm of the Law consequent upon James's submission to and identification with his father and his father's truth is thus a textual act: James pens the death of his mother's memory in order to rewrite the memory of his childhood within the Oedipal narrative.

The articulation of structures of desire outside of the Oedipal narrative becomes, then, a possibility. Woolf explores this possibility through Mrs. Ramsay and Lily. A victim of contradictory interpellations by the Oedipal machine, Mrs. Ramsay is aware of the constructed and incomplete nature of the various subject positions the concrete individual is called upon to occupy. Mrs. Ramsay thinks of that which is beyond daily activity as a "wedge-shaped core of darkness" (72), an angle, a point of intersection, whose bounds are indeterminate: "one after the other, she, Lily, Augustus Carmichael, must feel, our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it all is dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by. Her horizon seemed to her limitless" (73). Mrs. Ramsay exploits the play of differance thus liberated to construct alternatives to Oedipal structures of desire. Rather than structuring her desire in terms of a lack to be supplied from without and temporarily possessed, as the lighthouse is lit Mrs. Ramsay allows her desire to take the form of liberation from within through the rupture of a barrier. As Mrs. Ramsay watches the lighthouse, the beam of the lighthouse becomes representative of an internal process: "There rose, and she looked and looked with her needles suspended, there curled up off the floor of the mind, rose from the lake of one's being, a mist, a bride to meet her love" (74). The beam "[stroked] with its silver fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight... the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! it is enough!" (75). The autoerotic structure of Mrs. Ramsay's ecstasy locates Mrs. Ramsay as neither Oedipal lack nor pre-Oedipal plenitude to be exploited, but as the site of plenitude's issue and its return.

Unfortunately, however, Mrs. Ramsay's resistance to Oedipal structures of desire most frequently consists of the valourization of the pre-Oedipal. Mrs. Ramsay "pitied men always as if they lacked something - women never, as if they had something" (98). That something is the breast, the position of presence within the pre-Oedipal relationship. Mrs. Ramsay wishes that the pre-Oedipal relationship would not give way to the Oedipal: "she never wanted James to grow a day older or Cam either. These two she would have liked to keep for ever just as they were... never to see them grow up into long-legged monsters. Nothing made up for the loss" (67). For Mrs. Ramsay, the pre-Oedipal is paradise before the fall: "they were happier now than they would be ever again" (68). Mrs. Ramsay recognizes that the pre-Oedipal continues within the masculine Oedipal subject, and attempts to exploit this to gain power and assert once again the primacy of the pre-Oedipal: "she had the whole of the other sex under her protection; for reasons she could not explain, for their chivalry and valour, for the fact that they negotiated treaties, ruled India, controlled finance; finally for an attitude towards herself which no woman could fail to find agreeable, something trustful, childlike, reverential" (8). Critics have argued that Mrs. Ramsay's assertion of the pre-Oedipal is part of Woolf's larger strategy concerning gender roles, a strategy Joan Bennett argues is "much more interesting and profound than an advocacy of equal rights" (Virginia Woolf 88). According to Bennett, Woolf is asserting the value of "the essential quality of the female experience where it differs from the male" (88). Bennett, and other critics who make similar arguments, ignore the fact that in the novel feminine qualities and the position of the feminine subject are exploited more than valued by men, and that the assertion of the feminine as such only reinforces the binary opposition masculine/feminine that enables phallocentric society to oppress women. Mrs. Ramsay's assertion of the pre-Oedipal falls into this trap and remains inscribed within the Oedipal narrative. Even though she considers the transition from pre-Oedipal to Oedipal to be undesirable, Mrs. Ramsay accepts the rule of the phallus over the trajectory of her children's development: "she thought, [James] will never be so happy again, but she stopped herself, remembering how it angered her husband that she should say that" (68). Thus, Mrs. Ramsay's valourization of the pre-Oedipal becomes complicit in the movement of the Oedipal machine. Mrs. Ramsay urges that women "all must marry, since... an unmarried woman has missed the best of life" (58); wives must be subject to the rule of their husbands. In short, women must freely accept their exploitation by the Oedipal machine, neither "[evading] difficulties or [slurring] over duties" (9) demanded by their subjection.

Through Lily Briscoe, Woolf considers the possibilities of resistance to the Oedipal machine through deconstructive intervention in the Oedipal text. In "The Window," Lily initially remembers Mrs. Ramsay in what resemble Oedipal terms, considering Mrs. Ramsay as the key to a matriarchal alternative to Oedipal structures of desire. Lily recalls "sitting on the floor with her arms round Mrs. Ramsay's knees" (59), a position similar to the one in which James found himself at the novel's beginning. Lily seeks knowledge from this position: "she imagined how in the chambers of the mind and heart of the woman who was, physically, touching her, were stood, like the treasures in the tombs of kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out would teach one everything" (59). If one can possess the key to Mrs. Ramsay, then one can unlock absolute knowledge. Mrs. Ramsay, like Mr. Ramsay in the Oedipal order but rivalling that order, represents the transcendental signified, to which Lily attempts to gain access through identification with Mrs. Ramsay: Lily does not desire knowledge "that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge" (60). However, intimacy does not lead to knowledge; Lily cannot fix or possess Mrs. Ramsay's identity: "Nothing happened. Nothing! Nothing! as she leant her her against Mrs. Ramsay's knee... How then, she had asked herself, did one know one thing or another thing about people, sealed as they were?" (60). Having eschewed Oedipal structures of desire, Lily finds that the difficulties in fixing permanently the identity of others render her unable to construct matriarchal alternatives. At this point, though, Lily continues to try: "she knew knowledge and wisdom were stored in Mrs. Ramsay's heart" (60).

Ten years later Lily returns to the Ramsays' summer cottage and to her memories in an effort to deal with the unresolved tension created by her desire for Mrs. Ramsay. The question with which Lily begins her day, "really, what did she feel, come back after all these years and Mrs. Ramsay dead?" (165), begins in Lily a process of rereading and revising the text of her memory of Mrs. Ramsay: everything "this strange morning... became symbols, wrote themselves all over the grey-green walls. If only she could put them together, she felt, write them out in some sentence, then she would have got at the truth of things" (167). Motivating her explorations is Lily's unresolved desire to possess, "to want and not to have" (203) Mrs. Ramsay. Again Lily's ability to construct a stable identity for Mrs. Ramsay around which she can construct fixed channels for her desire is thwarted by her perception of the hermeneutic problematics involved: "One wanted fifty pairs of eyes to see with, she reflected. Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman with, she thought" (196). Lily thinks through her own multiple memories, multiple visions, of Mrs. Ramsay, and makes a crucial distinction: "Who knows even at the moment of intimacy, This is knowledge?" (195). Although knowledge is impossible, intimacy remains. Desire need not lead to hegemony. Thus, Lily does not attempt to rewrite her memory of Mrs. Ramsay as single linear narrative structured around a transcendental signified, but as a series of discontinuous moments, each "like a drop of silver in which one dipped and illuminated the darkness of the past" (195). By constructing multiple and fragile pasts, Lily exhausts her desire for intimacy without producing knowledge, without violently constraining the text of her memory around one particular transcendental signified. As Minow-Pinkey comments, this frees Lily from the narrative structures that constrained Mrs. Ramsay: "Mrs. Ramsay's death is the bleak loss of the possibility of total meaning, yet it also reveals an arbitrariness in the sign which reduces even her impressive symbols into fictional constructs with no compelling authority over the next generation" (Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject 116). Mrs. Ramsay as signifier is liberated into the play of differance in the text of Lily's memory, enabling Lily to articulate structures of desire beyond the possessive structure of Oedipal desire. As "the pain of the want" (205) diminishes, Lily finds comfort in her vision of Mrs. Ramsay "relieved for a moment of the weight that the world had put on her" (205), freed from the demands of desire. Freed from the desire to totally possess, Lily can find comfort in the inability of anyone to totally possess, to press servitude beyond death. Lily's painting provides an allegory of her efforts: Lily has her "vision" (237) and yet she knows "it would be hung in the attics... it would be destroyed. But what did it matter?" (237). "It was done; it was finished" (237) - but only temporarily, always already involved in the play of differance, always already waiting for a new vision, a revision. In this way Lily avoids incorporation into the Oedipal machine, or any other machine. In both the text of her memory and the act of her painting, Lily defies and defers the war waged in the phallic or any other name.

In To the Lighthouse, then, Woolf critiques Freud's Oedipal narrative and explores alternative structures of desire. Both the critique and the alternatives presented in the novel are directed by Woolf's deconstructive abhorrence of the reduction of reality into one narrative framework controlled by a single narrative key or transcendental signified, rather than by opposing to Freud's narrative another, equally reductive narrative. Woolf's critique illustrates the destructive logic of the phallocentric machine's war to impose a key, the phallus, in the economy of desire, and the wounds the machine inflicts on those who are caught within it. The alternative structures of desire Woolf dramatizes in the text avoid the hegemony of a transcendental signified, avoid incorporation into any machine. Read from within the problematics of postmodernism, the novel offers a way for social criticism to productively use rather than ignore the illegitimacy of all narratives.

Notes

1. Joan Bennett, in Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist, argues that it is the nature of Woolf the artist "to contemplate and recreate the human scene, not endeavour to change it" (82). The novel then is a symbolist attempt to organize the world of flux; Woolf's artistic vision, according to Bennett, is strictly personal.

2. Lilienfeld writes that "Woolf's vision of the Ramsays' marriage is a mature, sharp critical examination not only of the relations between her own parents, but also of the destruction wreaked by the Victorian social arrangement on human capacities for freedom and growth. Woolf offers alternatives" (149).

3. In his article "To the Lighthouse and War," James Haule examines Woolf's revisions of "Time Passes," focussing on the holograph and the revisions of the typescript Woolf prepared for the section's French publication. He concludes that the holograph is "quite clearly a feminist's view of the violence of the war, which she associates with male sexual brutality (166), and that while Woolf removed much of the explicitly political material from the passage as it was to be published in the novel, she did not edit to censor her rage but to attempt something else: "her desire to explain gives way to a more powerful urge to demonstrate" (178) the disintegration of the war years. Alex Zwerdling, in Virginia Woolf and the Real World, argues that the war's absence from the novel is merely apparent, and is part of Woolf's strategy, as set out in Three Guineas, to subvert the valourization of war: "The anonymity, the parenthetical dismissal, the futility of [Andrew Ramsay's] death are all intended to act as antidotes to the poison of the martial

myth" (275).

Chapter Four: The Years

By the 1930's, the decade in which Woolf wrote The Years, the atmosphere of the English literary scene had become decidedly more political than it had been when Bloomsbury began its ascendancy. The younger generation of writers was suspicious of what they took to be Bloomsbury's otherworldly aestheticism[1], and Woolf herself commented in 1932, between writing The Waves and The Years, that "it is perhaps true that my reputation will now decline" (AWD 223). Wyndham Lewis's scathing criticism of Woolf in Men Without Art, 1934, represents, albeit somewhat extremely, the younger generation's attitude: "A little old-maidish, are the Prousts and sub-Prousts [of whom Woolf was one and Lytton Strachey another, according to Lewis] I think. And when two old maids - or a company of old maids - shrink and cluster together, they titter in each other's ears and delicately tee-hee, pointing out to each other the red-blood antics of this or that upstanding figure, treading the perilous Without" (Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage 336). Woolf's response to this criticism is significant: "I've no doubt I'm prudish and peeping. Well then live more boldly, but for God's sake don't try to bend my writing one way or the other" (AWD 279). In spite of Lewis's criticism, Woolf continued to reduce the explicitly didactic portions of what had originally been The Pargiters, an essay-novel, even though it would have been evident to her the resultant novel, The Years, would be used by critics such as Lewis as another item to support their case[2]. As the novel was published, Woolf was well aware that The Years could be considered "as if it were merely the death song of the middle classes: a series of exquisite expressions" (AWD 336). Still, in the same diary entry Woolf indicates that she had not intended the novel to be the eulogy for a dying class structure, but to be an exploration of the same issues she would more sharply address in Three Guineas. The complexities Woolf perceived were involved in addressing these political issues, rather than prudishness, dictated Woolf's movement away from the didactic while writing the novel. Rather than a confirmation of Woolf's antipathy to social criticism or political involvement of any kind, Woolf's response to Lewis's criticism was a function of her awareness of the problems of reductive didacticism, of propaganda Marxist or fascist. Indeed, a large part of the novel explores the problems of living in a highly politicized age of competing new worlds, brave and otherwise.

The Years, as Bernard Blackstone suggests, is concerned with "a search for value" (206): "In what does value consist? [Woolf] seems to ask" (206). More specifically, Woolf is asking "what is the good society?". Critics have attempted to express Woolf's answer to this question in various terms. Blackstone argues that Woolf's vision of the harmonious society is a vision of an androgynous whole in which "the function of women, perhaps, is to bridge the gap between men and the natural world, to keep men sane and prevent them from losing themselves in abstractions and possessions" (215). In her article "The Years: A Feminist Novel," however, Laura Gottlieb gives us a different vision. While she agrees with

Blackstone on the importance of women in Woolf's vision of a good society, Gottlieb argues that Woolf attacks the unproblematic and patriarchal valorization of the masculine which manifests itself in statements such as Blackstone's: she argues that "Woolf's feminist vision in The Years is dual: that she both attacks patriarchal society directly and hints at a vision based on what she thought of as 'women's values'" (216). In her article "'Loving in the War Years," Patricia Cramer locates the source of Woolf's women's values in Jane Harrison's work on the matriarchal myths and rituals appropriated and subordinated by patriarchal civilization. In The Years, then, Woolf "has resurrected a prepatriarchal art form described by Jane Harrison" (204) and "invites us to leave behind the anachronistic masculinist rituals and join in the underground tradition of outsiders' resistance to tyranny, dancing on the grave of the father and welcoming in the feminist postpatriarchal age" (223). In her introduction to Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant, Jane Marcus goes so far as to assert that Woolf's vision of a good society was both "utopian" (3) and "Marxist" (2). It seems to me, however, that these answers neglect the most obvious source of Woolf's ethical thinking, and as a result oversimplify the way in which Woolf in The Years struggles with the complexities surrounding the articulation of a vision, or script, of a good society and the use of this script in social criticism.

The source to which I am referring is G.E. Moore's Principia Ethica, an inquiry into the principles and methodology of the science of ethics which, upon publication in 1903, revolutionized the field of ethics for many people and especially those attending Cambridge at the time. Moore's influence on Bloomsbury has been well documented, both by members of Bloomsbury such as Keynes and Leonard Woolf[3], and by critics such as S.P. Rosenbaum[4]. It might be supposed that Moorism was an exclusively Cambridge phenomenon to which Virginia, denied a university education, would have been indifferent at best. This is not the case, however. In a series of letters to Clive Bell, Vanessa Bell and other intimates such as Saxon Sydney-Turner throughout August, 1908, Woolf describes her intense reading of Principia Ethica: "I am climbing Moore like some industrious insect, who is determined to build a nest on the top of a Cathedral spire" (L 1: 340). In her sketch "Old Bloomsbury," a contribution to the Memoir Club made in the early 1920's, Woolf confirms the central place of "Moore's book" (MB 207) and the questions about good and beauty therein contained, in the Thursday evening discussions held at Virginia's house which began Bloomsbury and in which Woolf was an intense if not always vocal participant. Even as late as 1940 Woolf referred to Principia Ethica as "the book that made us all so wise and good" (L 5: 400). I do not intend to imply that Woolf unquestioningly adopted the whole of Moore's ethical theory; indeed, as Keynes and Leonard Woolf pointed out, few of Moore's disciples did[5]. Rather, Woolf exploits the radical consequences of the concepts and principles articulated by Moore and on which Moore foreclosed, in order to both call into question the grounds of legitimation of any hegemonic script of the good society - patriarchal or fascist, Moorean or Marxist, and articulate a deconstructive script of the good society.

There are three principles fundamental to Moore's ethics: the indefinability of good; the synthetic nature of all wholes of which good is predicated; and the distinction between means to good and ends that are good in themselves. Moore begins Principia Ethica by arguing that "'good' is a simple notion, just as 'yellow' is a simple notion; that, just as you cannot, by any manner of means, explain to anyone who does not already know it, what yellow is, so you cannot explain what good is" (7). Consequently, just as one cannot define yellow by referring to, say, sweet or coarse, so one cannot define good by referring to other concepts usually taken as synonymous for good, such as pleasure. Of things that are pleasurable one can always ask if they are also good. Good, like yellow, can thus only be known through direct perception or intuition. The indefinability of the good might seem to lead to relativism, in which good is what it is perceived to be by each subject. For Moore, however, this is not the case: good is not a subjective quality, but objective, independent of the perceiver. In "The Refutation of Idealism," an essay which appeared in the same year as Principia Ethica, Moore argues against idealism, which maintains the necessary connection of subject and object, the latter depending on the former for its existence: "the Idealist maintains that object and subject are necessarily connected, mainly because he fails to see that they are distinct, that they are two, at all. When he thinks of 'yellow' and when he thinks of the 'sensation of yellow' he fails to see that there is anything whatever in the latter which is not in the former" (13). Moore argues that to say we perceive something, whether it be yellow or good, only makes sense if we distinguish between the perception and what is perceived, and if what is perceived exists independently of the subject. Moore emphasizes the objectivity of simple notions such as good and yellow by arguing for a muted Platonism: not simple notions, but only the manifestations of simple notions, exist, "can have duration, and begin and cease to exist" (110). Simple notions are, rather than exist; simple notions eternally and unchangingly are, regardless of whether manifestations of them exist or are perceived.

Moore's Platonism has two important ramifications for attempts to answer the question "what is the good society?". The first involves the function of the copula in the analysis of complex wholes. Moore states that simple notions are "the ultimate terms by reference to which whatever is capable of definition must be defined" (9). Simple notions are the parts out of which complex wholes are synthetically composed. Since simple notions are monads, have self-contained identities independent of the whole of which they are part, the analysis of complex wholes is not a tautological operation: the 'is' linking the subject to be defined and its various predicates does not signify identity, but meaning generated through difference. The subject is not the sum of its predicates but a whole whose meaning depends on the relations between the various monads, relations that are external to these monads[6]. Consequently, "the value of such a whole bears no regular proportion to the sum of the value of its parts" (27) and wholes must be evaluated in themselves. This renders the determination of the best society problematic. The best society may not be a society composed of the greatest amount possible of the best conceivable thing that exists, but a society composed mostly of parts of indifferent value. Furthermore, there are things that exist of which we know nothing, and an infinite number of ways of combining those things that we do know. "It is, therefore, possible that we cannot discover what the Ideal [society] is," (184) Moore concludes. The next best thing is to aim at the best possible society (by possible Moore means both conceivable and capable of being realized), and the second ramification of Moore's Platonism concerns the method of determining this. Moore argues that in order to determine what things are intrinsically good, good in themselves and not merely good as means, "it is necessary to consider what things are such that, if they existed by themselves, in absolute isolation, we should yet judge their existence to be good" (187). In order to determine what is the best possible "we must similarly consider what comparative value seems to attach to the isolated existence of each" (187). Again, Moore seems to steer toward the whirlpool of relativism. However, in order to give ethics the status of a science, a body of knowledge validated by the consensus of independent researchers, in this case all individuals in society who ask the question "what is the good society?", Moore eliminates this radical possibility by assuming two things: the stability of the whole, and the possibility of consensus about the value of wholes. If wholes are stable, the relations between the parts of the whole are determinable, and if goodness is an unchanging, objective value which everyone with practice can intuit with roughly the same amount of clarity, then there is no reason why the science of ethics should not produce a consensually verifiable answer to the question "what is the good society?".

The third fundamental principle of Moore's ethics is the distinction between the means to good and that which is good in itself. Moore defines 'duty' as "that action, which will cause more good to exist in the Universe than any possible alternative" (148) and 'right' as "what will not cause less good than any possible alternative" (148). While good is a simple notion capable of intuitive determination, right is a complex notion determinable only by a very complex calculus:

> In order to shew that any action is a duty, it is necessary to know both what are the other conditions, which will, conjointly with it, determine its effects; to know exactly what will be the effects of these conditions; and to know all the events which will be in any way affected by our action throughout an infinite future. We must have all this causal knowledge, and further we must know accurately the degree of value both of the action itself and all these effects; and must be able to determine how, in conjunction with the other things in the Universe, they will affect its value as an organic whole. (149)

In short, the utilitarianism Moore represses in his determination of the good returns in its absurd extreme. Consequently, since the causal knowledge necessary for determining absolutely what is right can never be attained, "it follows that we never have any reason to suppose that an action is our duty" (149). As Keynes points out in his memoir "My Early Beliefs," this part, at least, of the Principia

Ethica was taken to heart and followed zealously by Moore's disciples: "We entirely repudiated a personal liability on us to obey general rules. We claimed the right to judge every individual case on its merits, and the wisdom, experience and self-control to do so successfully... We were, that is to say, in the strict sense of the term, immoralists" (61).

Nonetheless, it is misleading to state, as does Zwerdling, that "having thus disposed of the first principle of Victorian conduct [duty], Moore can proceed to build up a much more tentative and flexible ethical system, one that denies the authority of all established codes and supposedly self-evident moral laws" (154). Certainly, Moore could have done this, but this is precisely what Moore did not do. As Keynes indicates, in order to use Principia Ethica to support any type of ethics other than conformism, one must disregard or otherwise deal with the work's fifth chapter. In this chapter Moore argues that, since the absolute rightness of an action or a moral rule cannot be established, "it seems doubtful whether Ethics can establish the utility of any rules other than those generally practiced" (161). Consequently, "though we may be sure that there are cases where the rule should be broken, we can never know which those cases are, and ought, therefore, never to break it" (162). Moore concludes by advocating conformism and intolerance of civil disobedience: "there is, therefore, a strong probability in favour of adherence to an existing custom, even if it be a bad one" (164); since order is a greater good than chaos, and civil disobedience breaks the existing order, all civil disobedience should be punished. Moore presses his conformism so far as to state that "it is undoubtedly well to punish a man, who has done an action, right in his case but generally wrong, even if his example would not be likely to have a dangerous effect" (164). In his article "The Logical Structure of Moore's Ethics," Abraham Edels observes that Moore uses the principles and concepts he forges in Principia Ethica's first four chapters "to entrench the system of existent moral and legal rules and to discourage the individual from any attempt to change them... [the individual's] vision remain free while the chains of conformity become fixed upon him" (174).

"The discrepancy," Edels remarks later in the same paper, "between the promise and the performance of Moore's theory as an instrument for guidance of human life is startling" (174). Moore's theory, which might seem to encourage discussion and dissent, ends by advocating conformism. The gap between promise and performance can, however, be understood as a product of Moore's faith in and drive toward consensus. Moore's drive toward consensus forces him to ignore the destabilizing elements inherent in the first two of his fundamental principles. As observed previously, the indefinability of the good might have led Moore into a relativist ethics. Moore forecloses on this possibility by arguing that it makes no sense to talk about good in relative terms:

> In what sense can a thing be good for me? It is obvious, if we reflect, that the only thing which can belong to me, which can be mine, is something which is good, and not the fact that it is good. When, therefore, I talk of anything I get as 'my own good,' I must mean either

> that the thing I get is good, or that my possessing it is good. In both cases, it is only the thing or the possession of it which is mine, and not the goodness of that thing or that possession. (98)

Good, then, is an absolute quality regardless of who possesses what is good. Moore, however, refuses to consider that 'something is good for me' can plausibly be paraphrased as 'I think something is good, but I am not willing to assert that everyone will think similarly about this thing.' Moore's intuitionism implicitly assumes, without any justification, that the perception of good is analogous to the perception of a natural object, of which a comprehensive description can be obtained by integrating its appearances from all angles. The second element Moore ignores is the radically unstable nature of the copula in synthetic wholes. The copula in a synthetic whole joins a subject and its various monadic predicates to generate meaning not through identity but through the coordinated differences of the predicates. Thus, the relations between the predicates are themselves essential parts, or predicates, of the synthetic whole. These predicates, in turn, like all predicates of a synthetic whole, need to be related to the other predicates. And so on infinitely. The precise relation between the monadic predicates is irreducibly indeterminate; the meaning and the value of the synthetic whole cannot be fixed. The copula between subject and predicates denotes meaning's Tartarus, the abyss into which determinate meaning endlessly falls. The copula ensures that all wholes, such as 'the good society,' are the subjects of endless discussion[7]. Moore's drive toward consensus leads him to paper over the deconstructive cracks in the fundamental principles of his ethics. Consequently, Moore misrepresents existing society as the imperfect but progressive embodiment of the consensus of its members (all of whom are independent researchers) rather than as a coercive structure in which the good of a privileged few is pursued at the expense of the good of the rest.

Woolf's consistent stand against conformism, manifested in acts ranging from her refusal to accept an honorary degree from the university of Manchester to the writing of Three Guineas, may seem to argue for analysing Woolf's social criticism in The Years within a more explicitly political framework, such as Marxism. However, in The Years, political theories such as Marxism appear as soapbox demagoguery. Woolf's rejection of Moore's conformist conclusion does not necessarily indicate a rejection of his fundamental principles. Rather, as the rest of this paper will argue, Woolf's treatment of the question of the good society is more comprehensible when analysed in terms of a deconstructed Moorean framework, in which the radical consequences of Moore's principles and concepts are explored. Indeed, when seen in these terms, the novel's rejection of hegemonizing political theories such as fascism and Marxism is inevitable: since the intuition of good is not analogous to the perception of a natural object, and since synthetic wholes are radically indeterminate, neither any one definition of 'the good society' nor any one interpretation of history can be legitimated by an appeal to consensus or reason. Woolf's deconstructive treatment in The Years of the question of the good society has two consequences: the novel mounts its social criticism in terms of the tyranny of any attempt to impose any one script of the good society or any one interpretation of history; the novel does not articulate a single definition of the good society but explores the problems and possibilities of mediating between competing scripts.

The novel's form can also be explained as a consequence of Woolf's deconstructive vision. In her diary while writing the novel Woolf records her desire for "a system that did not shut out" (AWD 233), a system that was not a system, a form of the novel that did not reduce the multiplicity of life or attempt to coerce synthetic wholes into stability. On these grounds Woolf in the same diary entry criticises D.H. Lawrence: "Art is being rid of all preaching: things in themselves... whereas Lawrence would only say what proved something" (233). This criticism also extends to the first draft of the novel, The Pargiters. In the second essay of the work, Woolf analyses the work's first fictional chapter, what would later comprise the largest part of the 1880 segment of The Years: "we shall find certain principles underlying that particular scene and controlling it, so that it is not a succession of unrelated events. Nor are those principles so very deeply hidden - one is love; the other is money" (30). In The Years, Woolf abandons this reductive systematization of history in order to present history in its radical instability. This is not to say that love and money are not important in The Years, but that their connection in the novel is less rigidly systematized than in The Pargiters, and that events are overdetermined, are more than solely the products of principles. In the novel, the years pass and time is marked on at least four levels:

personal, private, public, and existential. Time seems to pass differently on each of these levels, and the relations between them are never specified and always overdetermined - we do not know, for example, the extent and nature of the contribution of Rose's traumatic childhood encounter with the grotesque expression of masculine desire, the discrimination she encountered as a child in the allocation of private space in the house, and public resistance to her feminist efforts, to Rose's development as a militant feminist, although we know that each of these elements is relevant to the whole constituted by Rose's history.

The Years is specifically concerned to critique the script of the good society materially functional in patriarchal late Victorian England, and to present an alternative, deconstructive script of the good society in the aftermath of the first world war's destruction of the hegemony of the patriarchal point of view in the determination of societal values. In the introduction to The Pargiters, which grew out of a lecture on women and the professions given to the London/ National Society For Women's Service in 1931, Woolf argues that this critique is imperative if professional women, women who have begun to escape the tyranny of the patriarchal vision of the good society, are to fully understand the possibilities and problems of their present, relatively liberated, position: "we cannot understand the present if we isolate it from the past... We must become the people that we were two or three generations ago. Let us become our great grandmothers" (8). The patriarchal script of the good society extends the masculine/ feminine binary opposition to gender social organization in terms of public and private: the public realm of society, the realm in which circulates all real power, is exclusively the province of men, while women are confined to the feminine, private realm of the home. In "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf finds the emblem of this social organization in the tea table: "It was the centre to which the sons returned from their work in the evening; the hearth whose fire was tended by the mother, pouring out tea" (MB 130). Defenders of patriarchy, such as Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen, justified the patriarchal view in terms of both harmony and necessity[8]. However, within the problematics of Woolf's deconstructive treatment of the issue, any such definition is incapable of legitimation, and any attempt to impose such a definition is coercive, a forceful foreclosure on the radical indeterminacy of the copula. Woolf exposes the tyranny of this foreclosure by utilizing Moore's distinction between things that are merely means to good (and therefore of little value in themselves) and things that are good in themselves: while men, because of their access to the public realm, are able to live lives in pursuit of things and ends that are good in themselves, in their confinement to the private realm, women are constrained to live lives of means toward the good of men.

Victorian patriarchy's attempt to impose its vision of the good society on the general social text begins in the family with the power of the family's patriarch. The family patriarch controls the family finances, and, as Woolf argues in The Pargiters, "the fact that the money was entirely his, that none of his sons and daughters could take up a profession or marry without asking his consent, had its effect on him - gave him a position of great power and responsibility" (31). The family patriarch uses his power to begin the division of society into public space in which men live lives in pursuit of good things and ends in themselves, and private space in which women live lives as instruments used by men in their pursuit of the good. For the Pargiter family, the ordering power of the patriarch has been enshrined in family ritual, specifically the tea table ritual, and so the patriarchal script of society is continually reinforced in the drama of everyday life. At the tea table, Colonel Pargiter asserts his authority as patriarch over his family: before he sits down, "the Colonel stood at the door and surveyed the group rather fiercely. His small blue eyes looked round them as if to find fault" (12), and after he sits down, he drinks tea from the symbol of patriarchal power, "the huge old cup that had been his father's" (12) even though "he detested tea" (12). The process of ordering then begins. Only Martin is singled out for individual attention by Colonel Pargiter; Delia, Milly, Rose and Eleanor are addressed as "you all" (12). Having asked about the events of his children's days, Colonel Pargiter makes it quite apparent that the events of Martin's day are much more important than the events of the girls' days: "'And you, Martin?' Colonel Pargiter asked, cutting short his daughter's statement" (12). Martin is rewarded with sixpence for his accomplishments at school, accomplishments that will enable Martin to enter the public space, and is ordered by the Colonel to "'take yourself off and get on with your prep'" (14) after the tea ceremony is over. Delia and Milly, in contrast, are rewarded only with criticism for the domestic tasks they perform through the day. The consequences of this ordering are far-reaching: while Edward pursues the good life at Oxford, receiving encouragement, wine and money from his father to do so, Eleanor is, in her nephew North's words, "sacrificed to the family - old Grandpapa without any fingers" (284), living, while her father lives, a life of servitude as her father's "housekeeper" (72).

In A Room of One's Own, Woolf scrutinizes in its specifically literary manifestation the argument used by patriarchy to justify the confinement of women to private lives of means: "it was impossible," asserted a bishop, "for any woman, past, present, or to come, to have the genius of Shakespeare" (45). Women do not possess the necessary faculties to live a life in pursuit of things and ends good in themselves, patriarchy argues, and so should be a means toward the attainment of such a life by men, who do possess the necessary faculties. Woolf counters this argument in A Room of One's Own by comparing the lives of William Shakespeare and Judith, his fictional sister. Although the two are equally gifted, the material conditions are such that William succeeds famously while Judith "kill[s] herself one winter's night and lies buried at some cross-roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle" (47). The patriarchal structure of Elizabethan England manufactures the founding premiss of patriarchy's argument. In The Years, Woolf uses a similar strategy to counter men's argument to women that "'nature did not intend you to be a scholar'" (63) or a lawyer or anything other than unpaid domestic labour: Woolf exposes the fact that there is nothing natural at all about women's supposed inferiority; rather it is the product of the tyranny of patriarchy's imposition of its vision of the good life on the general social text. In the novel's 1880 section, Woolf gives us a day in the lives of Edward Pargiter and Kitty Malone, both of whom live at Oxford. Both of them have good minds and have the potential to be good scholars: Edward's tutor tells Colonel Pargiter that "your son has a chance" (39) at winning a first in the upcoming round of examinations; Lucy Craddock, Kitty's history tutor, tells Kitty that she's "got quite an original mind" (51). Both love learning: while translating Greek, Edward's "dexterity in catching the phrase plumb in the middle gave him a thrill of excitement" (40); in answer to Mr. Robson's question "you're interested in history?" (55), Kitty replies "I love it" (55). Here, however, the similarities end. Kitty is not encouraged to develop her mind: while Colonel Pargiter sends Edward "a dozen of fine old port 'by way of stirrup-cup'" (39) to encourage him during exams, it is Dr. Malone who tells Kitty that "'nature did not intent you to be a scholar'" (63). Furthermore, the patriarchal ordering of space and time excludes Kitty from the unhindered intellectual life that Edward enjoys: while Edward's day "was parcelled out on the advice of his tutor into hours and half-hours" (39) of studying and relaxation, Kitty's day "had been Thursday at its very worst, she reflected; sights in the morning; people for lunch; undergraduates for tea; and a dinner-party in the evening" (48). The tasks Kitty has performed during her day are done to facilitate the unhindered and pleasurable intellectual lives that dons like her father and undergraduates like her cousin lead. Consequently, while Edward's mind on Thursday night "travelled by itself without impediments through a world of pure meaning" (40), Kitty's mind "was too tired" (49) to finish her readings for her lesson with Lucy Craddock on Friday. It is not surprising, then, that Edward "loved the sound of the bells" (40) at Oxford or that Kitty "hated the sound of the bells" (49): for Edward they signify the peaceful movement of his privileged life, for Kitty they signify the fact that there will always be another party for her to go to, always another appointment to keep that will prevent her from living a life in pursuit of intellectual good. In Victorian England as in Elizabethan England patriarchy manufactures the founding premiss of its rationalization of the confinement of women to private lives of means to masculine good.

In Virginia Woolf's The Years: The Evolution of a Novel, Grace Radin analyses the revisions Woolf made to The Pargiters as she transformed it into The Years. Having indicated the generally anti-didactic nature of Woolf's revisions, Radin makes the further observation that, although Woolf incorporated into Three Guineas much of the material deleted from The Pargiters, "wherever the MS dealt with 'women's bodies for instance... their passions,' these passages have been deleted both from the novel and from the essay" (35). On the point of sexuality, Radin concludes, "her courage failed" (35). It seems to me, however, that Radin overstates the extent to which Woolf eliminates the sexual economy from the novel: Woolf certainly submerged sexuality in the novel, but she did not eliminate it. The circumlocution through which sexuality is approached in the novel indicates the stifled nature of Victorian sexuality which Woolf attempts to represent. The structure of the Victorian sexual economy is still discernible under the drapery of Woolf's novel of manners. In this economy women are means toward the end of masculine pleasure, passive objects that facilitate the sublimation of masculine desire. This economy is most rigidly in operation in the novel's opening section, 1880. Colonel Pargiter's mistress is "the balm he clapped on his wound" (7) when his sense of self importance is diminished and he feels "out of it all" (6). In his rooms at Oxford, Edward Pargiter fuses his cousin Kitty Malone with Antigone, and so constructs her as the ideal object of his sexual desire: "She was both of them - Antigone and Kitty; here in the book; there in the room; lit up, risen, like a purple flower" (41). Any attempt by women to express desire actively is repressed. When Rose, disobeying her older sister, ventures out alone to Lamley's shop to obtain the bath toys she wants, she unwittingly crosses the boundary that divides the public masculine sexual space from the private feminine sexual space, and is consequently punished by becoming the object of raw masculine sexual desire. Having only barely escaped the man hiding by the pillar-box on her way to Lamley's, as Rose returns from Lamley's "she saw the man again. He was leaning with his back against the lamp-post, and the light from the gas lamp flickered over his face. As she passed he sucked his lips in and out. He made a mewing noise. But he did not stretch his hands out at her; they were unbuttoning his clothes" (24). Rose is thus repelled back to her house, the private space assigned to feminine desire. The correspondence of space and position within the sexual economy is evident as Milly and Delia, confined to the private space, are rebuked for explicitly expressing their interest in the young man who calls at the house two doors down by looking at him out of the drawing room window: "'Don't be caught looking,' said Eleanor warningly. The young man ran up the steps into the house; the door shut upon him and the cab drove away" (17). The active pursuit of amorous intentions is an exclusively masculine prerogative, and consequently the public space outside the house is masculine sexual terrain. Women as passive objects must be protected, kept safe from unauthorized sexual expression, and are consequently confined to the private space of the home: women, like Milly and Delia, cannot act upon their desires but must wait to be called upon by some young man in a hansom cab[9].

Woolf critiques the imposition of the patriarchal script of the good upon the sexual economy by exposing the fact that the sexual economy thus structured is not natural, but is a forced performance with prescripted roles that cannot totalize desire, a play whose foreclosure is always unstable. In The Pargiters Woolf deals explicitly with the theatrics of desire. The sublimation of Edward's sexual desire is facilitated by the prescripted role Kitty consciously plays. Edward "had been in love with his cousin Kitty Malone ever since he had seen her act last summer in a pageant" (68), and the image of her by which he sublimates his sexual desire into (albeit bad) Greek poetry is a photograph of her acting in the pageant. Because of her training, Kitty "knew without being told that Edward cherished an absurd photograph of her, holding a sword, representing the Lady Katharine" (116). Indeed, Kitty has been trained to sense and respond to all the idealized roles into which men write her. In The Years Woolf extends the stage to include society in general: the theatre of desire is the drawing room, the costume Kitty's evening dress. In The Years, Edward's idealized mental image of Kitty is not the photograph but his memory of her "in the white and blue dress that she had worn last time he dined at the Lodge" (41). Kitty finds her costume constricting: "she kicked off her shoes. That was the worst of being so large - shoes were always too tight; white satin shoes in particular. Then she began to unhook her dress. It was difficult; there were so many hooks and all at the back" (48). Kitty also finds constricting the role she is forced to play in the sexual economy. Kitty's sexual desire is not totalized by these roles: she would much rather kiss Jo Robson or Alf the farm hand than Edward or the any of the other undergraduates that come calling (56). Still, Kitty is not free to act on her own desire. Kitty's active expression of sexual desire with Alf "under the shadow of the haystack" (56) is halted by Old Carter, who "loomed up leading a bull with a ring through its nose and said 'Stop that!'" (56). Kitty's mother keeps careful control over the direction of Kitty's sexual desire:

> Edward, she mused, is in love with Kitty, but I don't know that I want her to marry him, she thought, taking up her needle. No, not Edward.... There was young Lord Lasswade.... That would be a nice marriage, she thought... he could give her what she wants.... What was it?... Scope, she decided. (65)

Jo Robson is not an acceptable direction for Kitty's desire, and, as it turns out, Kitty does marry Lord Lasswade.

The discrepancy between the patriarchal script of sexual desire and reality, and the coercion necessary to prevent women from abandoning the patriarchal script, are more visible in the interaction between Colonel Pargiter and Mira. "The whole bag of ordure" (JR 101), so tastefully contained in Jacob's visit to Laurette in Jacob's Room, is here spilled and Woolf makes no attempt to clean it up. Mira is a middle aged single mother forced by poverty into prostitution in a house in "the little street that lay under the huge bulk of the Abbey, the street of dingy little houses" (7). When the Colonel comes to visit, Mira is aware that "the old boy was out of spirits," (8) and that "her duty was to distract him" (8) Part of the game Mira is forced to play requires that she pretend that the two of them are young - boy and girl - and that their desire is as "gold-glancing" (8) as her hair. However, the Colonel's fascination with Mira's dog's eczema, the contents of Mira's "lean, poverty-stricken-looking bag" (9), the barrel organ music that filters through the window, and the other details Woolf provides the reader with, point out the gap between the play and reality, and emphasize the effort Mira must give to her role in order to make the play even somewhat convincing and so to satisfy the Colonel's desire.

The identities that the patriarchal script of the good society establishes for women are as disabling as the functions that women are assigned to perform. The position of women in patriarchy's hierarchy of responsibility is ambiguous, oscillating between child and adult to suit the patriarch's demands. Since their mother's illness, Milly and Delia have been burdened, along with Eleanor, with the responsibility of running the Pargiter household, and so begin to "[imitate] the manner of a grown-up person" (11). This premature sense of responsibility is heightened by the Colonel's bad temper. When, however, the Colonel is in a good mood, and the burden of responsibility has been lifted from the girls' shoulders, "they became children again" (29). Eleanor spends most of her life in this ambiguous position. Eleanor is neither child nor adult, but "the buffer between [the Pargiter children] and the intensities and strifes of family life [a large source of which is the Colonel's demanding nature]" (13). While adult enough to look after the family accounts, and while the Colonel thinks her "not a child any longer" (81) when he needs to find a solution to his problems with Mira, Eleanor in 1891 is still a child in terms of her ability to pursue independently her own desire: as the Colonel gives her change so she can for once take a cab rather than an omnibus to her next appointment, "Eleanor felt the cold childish feeling that his pockets were bottomless silver mines from which half-crowns could be dug eternally" (82). While at the Robsons Kitty also senses the ambiguity of her position: silently expressing her own desire - to kiss Jo Robson - Kitty "felt as if she had given her nurse the slip and run off on her own" (56). Kitty's active expression of desire, like Rose's, transgresses patriarchal guidelines, and suffers from the same threat of punishment. The same ambiguity structures Kitty's identity even with her change from daughter of Dr. Malone to wife of Lord Lasswade. As Kitty hurries from her duty as host at her husband's party to board a train that will take her to Lasswade Castle empty of other people and consequently of obligations to people other than herself, Kitty again senses the ambiguity: "'What fun!' she said to herself, as if she were a little girl who had run away from her nurse and escaped" (206).

More disabling is the structure of the relationship between mother and daughter within the patriarchal script of the good society. The ambiguous position of women in the patriarchal hierarchy fractures the relationship between mother and daughter into an unsolvable dilemma. As her mother is dying, Delia is faced with this dilemma. Mrs. Pargiter's seemingly interminable illness places both Mrs. Pargiter and Delia in a "borderland between life and death" (22): as long as Mrs. Pargiter does not die Delia cannot live. Consequently, Delia's desire for life motivates her to angrily desire her mother's death. Upon hearing the news of her mother's temporary recovery from her decline, Delia directs this anger toward her mother's portrait: "So you're not going to die, she said, looking at the girl balanced on the trunk of the tree; she seemed to simper down at her daughter with smiling malice. You're not going to die - never, never! she cried clenching her hands together beneath her mother's picture" (32). The conflict between Delia and her mother seems to be a matriarchal version of the Oedipus complex: in order to gain an identity, to gain a life for herself, Delia must either abandon her fight against her mother and identify with her, or she must carry the conflict to its end and reject her mother, commit matricide. The same dilemma in the Oedipal relationship between father and son is solvable: the son through identification with the father gains the power to assert himself, to live his own life. For Delia the dilemma has no easy resolution: matricide would result in the loss of the maternal legacy Woolf values so highly in Three Guineas[10]; identification with the mother would result in suicide, the identification with a role patriarchally scripted as the negation of self. As Ellen Rosenman in her book The Invisible Presence points out, images of the mother in The Years are powerful yet potentially destructive traps for daughters: while they "[offer] the daughter a place to confirm her identity" (49), they are also "coercive and threaten the daughter's sense of self" (49). Any attempt to establish a relationship between mother and daughter without reference to patriarchal authority, and so without being fractured by the unsolvable dilemma, is perceived by patriarchy to be a threat. Eugenie's dancing in Sara and Maggie's bedroom is one such attempt: Maggie's "eyes rested on her mother with admiration" (110) as Eugenie asserts her the desire of her body to respond to music, in the choreographed movement of the female body in space without reference to phallic authority (Eugenie dances without a partner). This relationship is interrupted by "Sir Digby's voice at the door. 'Eugenie! It's very late, Eugenie!'" (111). Sara's comment on her father's interruption is telling: "'Pirouetting up and down with his sword between his legs; with his opera hat under his arm and his sword between his legs'" (111). Patriarchy forbids the active expression of desire that does not recognize the authority of the phallus, and consequently will not tolerate any relationship between mother and daughter other than a fractured relationship structured around the construction of the mother as passive means toward masculine ends, as negation of self.

Patriarchal metaphysics serves as a discourse of legitimation for the patriarchal script of the good society. The script is inspired by the divine Word, and reflects the structure of the eternal, Ideal realm: just as the Father rules in heaven, so should it be on earth. Patriarchy's sacred rituals, such as Mrs. Pargiter's funeral, recognize and celebrate this consubstantiation. At Mrs. Pargiter's funeral, the subjugation of Mrs. Pargiter's life to male pleasure is glorified as her death is expressed as subjugation to the inexorable will of the Father: "'We give thee hearty thanks,' said the voice, 'for that it has pleased thee to deliver this our sister out of the miseries of this sinful world" (68). Mrs. Pargiter's life of service, first to her father and then to her husband, was a reflection of and a prelude to her eternal life of service to the Father. Woolf critiques the use to which patriarchy puts metaphysics by exposing the incongruity between the ideal represented by the ritual, and the actors in the ritual who are supposedly consubstantial with the ideal. As the funeral draws to a close, Delia makes this incongruity explicit: "None of us feel anything at all, she thought: we're all pretending" (68). None of the Pargiters feel what the ritual requires them to feel, least of all Colonel Pargiter who has looked forward to his wife's death as the inaugurating event of a new life: "One of these days - that was his euphemism for the time when his wife was dead - he would give up London, he thought, and live in the country" (7). This is not just because the Pargiters are insincere, but because the ceremony itself is also insincere: it does not adequately express its participants' feelings but rather attempts to force them into its patriarchal structure. Delia perceives this acutely. Delia's attempt to understand her mother's death as an event that has in some way restored her mother to life, "life mixing with death, of death becoming life" (68), is interrupted by the minister's voice, which interprets Mrs. Pargiter's death as the beginning of an eternal life of self negation, of an eternal death. Delia protests: "What a lie! she cried to herself. What a damnable lie! He had robbed her of the one feeling that was genuine; he had spoilt her one moment of understanding" (68). Even the minister has his doubts: as he read the service, he "seemed to hurry, as if he did not altogether believe what he was saying. He seemed to pass from the known to the unknown; from what he believed to what he did not believe; even his voice altered" (67). Woolf presses the irony into satire as she presents the funeral ceremony as a poorly acted burlesque of what the ceremony should ideally be. The ceremony begins at Abercorn terrace with men "lurching down the stairs carrying the coffin" (65). The funeral procession becomes something of a spectacle as it progresses, with servants peeping at it from behind the drawn blinds of neighbouring houses, "a poor-looking shabby women prowling on the outskirts" (67) of the cemetery, and the gravediggers with their spades waiting for the ceremony to be over so they can complete their work. The morning ends on an indecorous note: as people leave the cemetery after the completion of the ceremony, the gathering becomes "a shrouded and subdued morning party among the graves" (69). In her narration of Mrs. Pargiter's funeral, Woolf has satirically exploited the incongruity between patriarchy's metaphysical ideal and the reality it claims to structure, in order to render absurd patriarchy's use of metaphysics as a legitimating discourse.

While it is true that in The Years Woolf is concerned with condemning for its oppression of women the patriarchal script of the good society, Woolf is also aware that its tyranny has a wider scope. The privilege of the male is not unqualified in the patriarchal script of the good society. The male possesses his position of privilege within a hierarchy of power the ultimate earthly head of which is the State. As public servants, men live lives of means toward the State's good. Woolf shows us the self-effacement of the individual before the State in the judicial proceedings in which Morris performs. The judge, Old Curry, is transformed into a signifier of the State as he sits "under the Lion and the Unicorn" (85). The proceedings that revolve around "his lordship" (85) "forbade personalities" (85) and transform the other performers, such as Morris, into instantly obedient functionaries of the State whose uniform of wig and gown indicate their anonymity and substitutability. The novel is littered with men whose lives have been maimed in their performance of public service. Colonel Pargiter "had lost two fingers of the right hand in the Mutiny, and the muscles had shrunk so that the right hand resembled the claw of some aged bird" (12). Digby, whose dedication to the public service has won him a knighthood, has been worn out by his work: "he lets everyone else take a holiday, but he never takes one himself. And then, when he's done a full day's work at the office, he comes back with his bag full of papers" (97) Eugenie relates. North's education had been cut short by his duty as soldier in the first world war: when he should have been going to college, "he had been in the trenches; he had seen men killed" (308). War is the hideous but inevitable outcome of the patriarchal organization of public life: only raw power mediates the uncompromising demands of competing patriarchal states, and to the furtherance of each state's demand its public servants obediently march. Sara's acerbic response to North's enlistment connects war with the assertion of phallic authority and mocks the metaphysics by which war is glorified. Sara calls North a lieutenant in "the Royal Regiment of Rat-catchers" (218) and describes his appearance in terms that indicate the reality of trench warfare: "'There he sat... in his mud-coloured uniform, with his switch between his legs, and his ears sticking out on either side of his pink, foolish face" (218). Rats and mud rather than glory and honor will be North's reward for his service to God and the King.

The first world war destroyed temporarily the hegemony of the patriarchal script of the good society. No longer could patriarchy legitimate its tyranny with claims of the superiority of male rule. Eleanor's suspicion that the members of the patriarchal ruling elite, such as Old Curry, were not "immune from human weakness" (87), were not "infinitely sad and wise" (86), is confirmed by the devastation brought about by the war. Woolf observes in Three Guineas that "the public schools and universities with their elaborate machinery for mind-training and body-training have failed" (100) to produce Plato's philosopher-king. The novel echoes the view of the war Woolf expresses in an earlier sketch, "The Mark on The Wall": the "masculine point of view" (48) has been rendered absurd by the war and can be "laughed into the dustbin... leaving us all with an intoxicating sense of illegitimate freedom" (48). The general social text, a synthetic whole, has been freed from constraint into radical instability. It becomes possible, then, to articulate alternative scripts of the good society. In 1917, as Sara, Nicholas, Maggie, Renny and Eleanor dine in a coal cellar while bombs drop overhead, they celebrate this possibility: "'Here's to the New World!' they all cried, raising their glasses, and clinking them together" (224). Nonetheless, the instability of the social text also presents problems: it disrupts the "familiar proportions" (161) of ordered life that Eleanor finds comforting; the chaos can be "like the curve of a scythe which cuts, not corn, usefully; but destroys, revelling in sheer sterility" (113); and the dissolution of the old order may be followed by the construction of a new order that is worse than the old.

During the years from 1917 onward, some of the positive possibilities created by the destruction of the hegemony of patriarchal script of the good society begin to be realized. Maggie and Renny's marriage, a "happy marriage" (229), is non-hierarchical: household tasks, such as putting the children to bed and serving visitors, are performed by both of them together (225; 216). Sara and Nicholas's relationship does not position Sara as a means by which Nicholas fulfills his desire; their relationship does not involve notions of possession - Sara "wore no engagement ring, Eleanor observed" (217). Their relationship, rather, is an affectionate friendship between two independent and equal people - a relationship between men and women not possible within the patriarchal script. During the 1917 dinner party at Maggie and Renny's, the ceremonies and conventions that had their part in producing the war, have been abandoned for spontaneity and frankness. The conversation is not limited to the "battledore and shuttlecock" (198) banter batted around at Lady Lasswade's 1914 dinner party: Nicholas openly talks about his homosexuality, and Sara proclaims her scorn of North's participation in the war in a manner that is not that "of a lady lunching with a gentleman" (176). Some progress has been made in breaking down barriers erected by patriarchy to exclude women from living lives in pursuit of things and ends that are good in themselves. Rose's suffering while "'sitting on a three-legged stool having meat crammed down her throat" (178) was not in vain: the vote has been won for women. Eleanor's niece, Peggy, pursues a profession as a doctor. Even in little things such as smoking there has been progress: in 1891, Eleanor, who "liked the smell of cigars" (83), must content herself with the smoke from her father's cigar; in the novel's 'Present Day' section, Eleanor "[puffs] at her cheroot" (249).

The destruction of patriarchal hegemony also opens the possibility for the articulation of alternative scripts of the good society. Nicholas's Platonic vision of how humans should live, which he expounds to Eleanor in 1917, is one such alternative. Humans right now, Nicholas argues, are infants, "each is his own little cubicle; each with his own cross or holy book" (227). The human soul wishes to escape this confinement, however: "'It wishes to expand; to adventure; to form - new combinations'" (226); human souls need to live "wholly, not like cripples in a cave" (227). Nicholas argues for a way of living, a civilization, that allows the free play of the copula in the formation of synthetic wholes, a civilization that eliminates the tyrannies and deformities of competing dogmas. The consequences of Nicholas's deconstructive vision of the good society are twofold: the good society is the subject of endless discussion; this discussion does not lead to violence. Nicholas's ideas do not go uncontested: "'It's all damn rot'" (227) Renny concludes, and Sara sneeringly calls him "'The professor preaching his little sermon'" (283). Nor do his speeches go uninterrupted. In the 'Present Day' section of the novel, Nicholas's speech is so beset by interruptions that only with difficulty does he get past his opening "'Ladies and gentlemen!'" (316), and only privately to Kitty does he have the opportunity to relate the contents of the speech he was going to have made: "'I was going to drink to the human race. The human race... which is now in its infancy, may it grow to maturity!'" (324). Nonetheless, Nicholas's attempt at making a speech triggers off a series of discussions on the nature of the good society. Delia, talking with Martin and Rose, declares that the version of the good society represented by the drawing room at Abercorn Terrace "was Hell!" (317). North, responding to Kitty's demand for a speech on "what we ought to do" (321) from him to replace the speech Nicholas was not able to give, thinks "to live differently" (322) in "silence and solitude" (322). North then demands a speech on the same topic from Maggie, who "laughed... no idols, no idols, no idols, her laughter seemed to chime" (323). The endless discussion, however, does not lead to violence: the only things thrown are rose petals (320). Violence would be an attempt to impose a conclusion upon the discussion, would be tyranny. Consequently, there is "no peroration" (328), no summing up. This dinner table discussion is the paradigm of Woolf's deconstructive script of the good society, a society in which no concept or system of concepts is allowed to tyrannize the general social text. By taking the dinner table discussion as her paradigm, Woolf is not advocating a retreat from the public into the private. Rather, having critiqued the hegemonic imposition of scripts of the good society, which divide society up into a hierarchy of lives lived as means to the good of an ultimate authority, the State, Woolf offers the reader her deconstructive script, in which the private is extended into the public and the metaphysics of public discourse are abolished. Consequently, institutions are subordinated to the good of the individual[11].

Any realization of Woolf's deconstructive vision is, however, precarious. Capitalism poses a hegemonic threat. In Three Guineas Woolf argues that those who "change [their] position from being victims of the patriarchal system... to being the champions of the capitalist system" (78) are merely changing one life of means for another: "If you succeed in your profession," Woolf writes, "the words 'For God and Empire' will very likely be written, like the address on a dog-collar, round your neck" (81). Peggy is aware of this dilemma: having taken advantage of women's newly acquired right to enter the professions, she finds she has become "hard; cold; in a groove already; merely a doctor" (270). Equally threatening are attempts to reimpose on the social text a political hegemony. The seemingly impotent and comic soapbox demagogues selling their different brands of "Joostice and liberty" (184) in 1914 have gained power and the world's attention in the 'Present Day' section of the novel: the "fat man gesticulating" (252) is no longer on a soapbox in Hyde Park, but has become a fascist dictator on the front page of Eleanor's newspaper. In Three Guineas Woolf writes "It is the figure of a man; some say, others deny, that he is Man himself, the quintessence of virility... He is called in German and Italian Fuhrer or Duce; in our own language Tyrant or Dictator. And behind him lie ruined houses and dead bodies" (162). Furthermore, Woolf is aware that the opportunity to live the good life in postwar England is inextricably caught up in the web of privilege woven by the British Empire. Peggy, musing of Eleanor's desire to be "happy in this world" (295), thinks: "The far-away sounds, the suggestion they brought in of other worlds, indifferent to this world, of people toiling, grinding, in the heart of darkness, in the depths of the night, made her say over Eleanor's words, Happy in this world, happy with living people. But how can one be 'happy'? she asked herself, in a world bursting with misery" (296). Through North, Woolf reveals the extent to which the good life in London depends on the toil and misery of those in the heart of darkness. Having just returned from Africa, North wonders at London's luxury: "The gaiety, the colour, the variety, were amazing after Africa. All these years, he thought to himself, looking at a floating banner of transparent silk, he had been used to raw goods; hides and fleeces; here was the finished article. A dressing-case, of yellow leather fitted with silver bottles, caught his eye" (236). Woolf is also aware that even within England the opportunity to live a good life is not extended to all: the war has not broken England's class structure. Crosby, the

Pargiter parlourmaid for over forty years, is retired when Eleanor sells Abercorn Terrace and moves into her new flat. For Crosby, however, retirement merely means another job. Even though "she was no longer able to work as she had done" (232), Crosby is forced to continue with strenuous domestic service in order to survive: "It took all the strength out of her to do her own shopping, let alone to clean the bath. But it was all take-it-or-leave-it now" (232). The war does not mark a turning point in Crosby's life, as it does in Eleanor's: "the war was over - so somebody told her as she took her place in the queue at the grocer's shop" (233) and "[does] battle with the crowd of shoppers in the High Street" (232).

The realization of Woolf's deconstructive script is threatened not merely by movements such as fascism and capitalism, which, like patriarchy, have a finite temporal life span and are capable of defeat. It is threatened by the nature of humans themselves. Keynes points out that the successful realization of Moore's ethics depends on the extent to which the human race "consists of reliable, rational, decent people" (62). The same is true of Woolf's deconstructive script. The war, among other things, proved that the human race consists of beings motivated as much by irrational desires as by rational thought. One of the strongest of these irrational desires, North perceives, is possessiveness, the desire to exert authority over others: "how then can we be civilized" (289) North asks, if people are interested "only in their own; their own property; their own flesh and blood, which they would protect with the unsheathed claws of the primeval swamp... even Maggie" (288). This implies that the wholeness Nicholas desires for the human soul can never be completely attained: "we cannot help each other, he thought, we are all deformed" (290). Consequently, the world will always have its soapbox demagogues, those who shout I, I, I, "Oi, oi, oi" (185). One of the uses to which Woolf puts her satire in the novel is the debunking the myth of human progress, which denies the irredeemable irrationality of human beings. North, for example, attempts to assert the difference between his generation and the preceding generation: "For them it's all right, he thought; they've had their day: but not for him, not for his generation" (312). North wants "a different life" (312) for his generation: "not halls and reverberating megaphones; not marching in step after leaders, in herds, groups, societies... not black shirts, green shirts, red shirts" (312). "But how can I," North asks "unless I know what's solid, what's true; in my life, in other people's lives?" (313). North's attempt to assert this difference is, however, ironically undermined by Woolf. North's ideas paraphrase the ideas Nicholas articulates in 1917: "'We cannot make laws and religions that fit because we do not know ourselves" (216). Also, although North's generation may not have "black shirts, green shirts, red shirts," (312) they will have Hitler's brown shirts, and will be herded into groups for and against fascism. Woolf's description of London as "the eternally burning city" (101) whose roads are filled with "caravans piled with the goods of tribes migrating in search of water, driven by enemies to seek new pasturage" (101) places the city and its problems not as the telos of the progress of Western civilization, but as another temporal intersection of the recurring struggle between civilization and barbarity, tyranny and resistance to tyranny.

In The Years, then, Woolf's critique of the tyranny of patriarchal Victorian England leads to the articulation of a deconstructive script of the good society. Woolf presents this script as a possibility, not as a dialectical inevitability or as any other sort of teleological certainty. Eleanor's question at the novel's conclusion, "And now?" (331), remains unanswered. The war in the name of the name never ceases, and the success of attempts to defer this war is never guaranteed. Discarding Moore's conformism meant liberty for Keynes. For Woolf, it meant liberty in the face of overwhelming tyranny. Even the rising sun at the novel's end does not dispel the novel's overall pessimism. In Three Guineas, as the threat of a fascist invasion of England grew more serious, Woolf articulates this pessimism more explicitly. The drama of Creon and Antigone, which appears in various permutations throughout The Years, becomes the perennial drama of tyranny and freedom once again acted out on Europe's stage: "As we listen to the voices we seem to hear an infant crying in the night, the black night that now covers Europe, and with no language but a cry, Ay, ay, ay, ay... But it is not a new cry, it is a very old cry... [it] is the voice of Creon, the dictator" (161) who destroys Antigone, since "she had neither capital nor force behind her" (161). Woolf concludes that "pictures and voices are the same today as they were 2000 years ago" (162).

Notes

1. In his study The Auden Generation, Samuel Hynes comments that, while the assertion that all of the English writers who began to flourish in the 'thirties "were all of necessity politically motivated," (393) is part of the orthodox 'Thirties Myth,' to which Woolf contributed her share, social issues such as war "were the forces that shaped the 'thirties generation" (41), the generation of young poets and novelists after Woolf. The "crisis in society" (67) rather than the crisis in epistemology "becomes a literary problem" (67).

2. W.H. Mellers, in a June 1937 review in Scrutiny, describes the novel as full of "sentimentalities and ineptitudes" (Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage 397); the characters "are phantoms; they grow old, but they cannot change because they have never been alive, in so far as they exist at all it is as a bundle of memories" (397).

3. In "My Early Beliefs," Keynes writes "I went up to Cambridge at Michaelmas 1902, and Moore's Principia Ethica came out at the end of my first year... its effect on us, and the talk which preceded and followed it, dominated and perhaps still dominate, everything else" (52).

4. In his study of the origins of Bloomsbury, Victorian Bloomsbury, S.P Rosenbaum argues that "Moore's personal and intellectual fusion [of Cambridge's tradition of Platonism and utilitarianism] became permanently part of Bloomsbury's thinking" (216).

5. Keynes comments "There was one chapter in the Principia of which we took not the slightest notice [Chapter V: Ethics in Relation to Conduct]. We accepted

his religion, so to speak, and discarded his morals" (52)

6. In his essay "External and Internal Relations," Moore sets out to prove this logically, and so refute statements such as "'No terms are independent of any of the relations in which they stand to other terms'" (276).

7. Moore would argue that he is not concerned with "lexicography" (6) and that "my business is solely with that object or idea, which I hold, rightly or wrongly, that the word is generally used to stand for" (6). Herbert Hochberg, in his paper "Moore's Ontology and Nonnatutal Properties," attempts to further Moore's argument by claiming that "ontological ties hold between entities" (97) and that these ontological ties are not concepts or relations capable of being predicated of a subject but are simply implied in the copula. This strategy seems to me to be dubious. Moore provides simple concepts with Platonic status through the manipulation of the grammatical structure of a sentence and the differential nature of the signifier - indeed one could argue that Moore's question "what is good?" makes no ontological sense but is meaningful only because language permits the transformation of adjectives into substantives. 8. In his work The Science of Ethics, Leslie Stephen attempts to transform Darwin's theory of evolution into an ethical system. Stephen argues that "the form of the family group... is relatively constant" (126) because "its form is determined within narrow limits by the organic structure of the individual" (126). The patriarchal Victorian family structure is, then, the inevitable outcome of the evolution of the human being, and as such is morally good. In Principia Ethica Moore makes short work of

Darwinian ethics: "We must not, therefore, be frightened by the assertion that a thing is natural into the admission that it is good; good does not, by definition, mean anything that is natural; and it is therefore always an open question whether anything that is natural is good" (44).

9. Susan Squier, in her essay "The Politics of City Space in The Years," argues that "the pillar box... marks the boundary between the world of sexuality, which men have annexed for themseves despite Rose's heroic attempt to liberate it, and the world of the private home, where women live in cloistered, pre-sexual retreat" (226). I certainly agree with Squier that the victorian sexual economy genders space, but I do not think that the private home is in any way "pre-sexual." The private home is the space of passive sexuality, and as Woolf points out in The Pargiters, the training women receive in this space is highly erotic. Kitty,"severly trained as she was from childhood... was naturally, she was inevitably, highly sensitive to the impressions of her body." Consequently, she is aware that Tony Ashton, who is in love with her cousin Edward, does "not look at her as other men did" (116). While Kitty finds it agreeable that "her body and his body have so little natural attraction for each other that they were singularly at ease" (116), "some stimulus was so lacking that talking to Tony left her cold" (116).

10. The legacy women receive from their nineteenth century mothers Woolf in Three Guineas expresses in terms of "poverty, chastity, derision and freedom from unreal loyalties" (92). Woolf values these qualities as the only ones that will work toward preventing war, and exhorts professional women to not part with them "but

combine them with some wealth, some knowledge, and some service to real loyalties" (92).

11. I would (somewhat tentatively) agree with Raymond Williams's statement in "The Bloomsbury Fraction" that Bloomsbury, Virginia Woolf included, was "a group of and for the notion of free individuals" (169), but I would disagree with his argument that this notion did not take into account the institutional production of the free individual. Woolf, at least, as I have been arguing, was very much aware of the power of instituions to construct subjectivity, and in Three Guineas delineated a course of radical institutional change in order to provide subject positions that would resist the movement to war. Nonetheless, Woolf is suspicious of all institutions. Institutions are the tools of those who want to hegemonically impose their own views, patriacrhal or Marxist, on others, and they lend themselves to the establishment of subject positions that are merely functions of the State's authority. Institutions, as embodiments of the metaphysical State, are anathema to Woolf's deconstructive script of the good society. An extension of the private into the public seems to be the only way of realizing, even if somewhat precariously, this script.

Conclusion

The critic for whom "every work of art can be taken to pieces, and those pieces can be named and numbered, divided and sub-divided, and given their order of precedence, like the internal organs of a frog" (44) forgets that there is "such a thing as life" (45), ignores the fact that the text cannot be reduced to a single, unequivocal interpretation, Woolf writes in her essay "The Anatomy of Fiction." According to Woolf, the critic's proper job is to "[tidy] up after the party is over" (44). Although in this thesis I have attempted to heed Woolf's warning against the hegemonic imposition of a critical paradigm, it seems to me that Woolf in "The Anatomy of Fiction" creates for the critic a dilemma that offers no intermediate position: caught in the master/slave opposition, the critic is either a death-dealing dictator, or the equivalent of a domestic drudge. Nonetheless, the critic cannot abandon the use of categories, however provisional, in literary analysis without reducing criticism to an impressionistic level. Perhaps, however, it is the critic's awareness of the provisional and subjective nature of her or his analytical categories that can prevent her or his impalement on the former of the two horns. In "How Should One Read a Book," Woolf presents the relationship between critic and text in less hostile terms, not in terms of master and slave but in terms of dialogue: "we may try to sink our identity as we read. But we know we cannot... there is always a demon in us who whispers, 'I hate, I love,' and we cannot silence him. Indeed, it is precisely because we hate and we love that our relation with the poets and the novelists is so intimate" (268). It is precisely because the critic admits the provisionality and the subjectivity of her or his analyses rather than attempts to mask them by claiming the absolute objectivity of the correct critical paradigm or the absolute objectivity of the text in itself, that the critic avoids being caught up in the master/slave relationship and acquires an intimate, productive relationship with the texts she or he is interpreting. In this thesis I have aimed for this productive intimacy: I do not claim that reading Woolf's texts within the problematics of postmodernism is the "correct" way of reading Woolf's texts, nor even do I claim that it is necessarily the best way. Rather, as I have argued throughout this thesis, it is a way of reading Woolf's texts that I feel is more adequate than others, and that leads to some productive and interesting conclusions.

Generally, I have argued that a reading of the politics of Woolf's fiction within the problematics of postmodernism deals more adequately with the political aspect of Woolf's aesthetics than do modernist or Marxist readings of Woolf's texts. A modernist reading of Woolf's texts construes their aesthetics as an attempt to escape politics into the world of pure form. A Marxist reading construes the aesthetics of Woolf's texts as a method of subverting hegemonic narratives and articulating oppositional, equally hegemonic, narratives. A postmodern reading of the politics of Woolf's aesthetics argues that neither the modernist nor the Marxist reading does justice to the complexity of Woolf's texts: the deconstructive politics of Woolf's texts grapples with rather than attempts to escape from the exercise of power in society, but problematizes Marxism's own hegemonic designs. Woolf's texts deconstruct the phallogocentric narratives that those who exercise power attempt to impose on the general social text, and articulate non-hegemonic alternatives. In this thesis, I have approached the deconstructive politics of Woolf's texts through the metaphor of the machine, useful as an analytical tool forged of Derridean and Althusserian discourses. Perhaps, however, the metaphor of the machine suggests a more systematized attempt by those who exercise power to hegemonize the general social text than occurs most frequently in reality. In retrospect it seems that power could be more subtly, more flexibly conceptualized as an entangled nexus with conflict and contradiction at its center as well as at its margins, with various logics and games competing for control.

Nonetheless, several general conclusions regarding the connection between the politics and aesthetics of Woolf's texts can still be drawn. Taken together, the thesis's chapters on Jacob's Room, To the Lighthouse, and The Years suggest that despite the apparent formal discontinuity between these works, there is continuity between them in terms of the deconstructively political ends to which the various formal devices are employed. While composing each of the three novels, Woolf found herself forced to experiment anew with form, pushing her technique in unexplored directions. Woolf wrote that, with Jacob's Room, she had found "a new form for a new novel... the approach will be entirely different this time: no scaffolding; scarcely a brick to be seen; all crepuscular" (AWD 42). Woolf recorded the same innovative urge while writing To the Lighthouse: "I have an idea that I will invent a new name for my books to supplant 'novel'. A new - by Virginia Woolf. But what? Elegy?" (AWD 108). The Years, which began life as The Pargiters, an "essay-novel" (AWD 234), Woolf considered a "discovery of... the combination of the external and the internal" (AWD 288). Yet, in all of these three novels, the formal devices are employed to work against patriarchal narratives. In Jacob's Room, Woolf uses multiple and unreliable points of view to deconstruct patriarchy's narrative of the ordering, transcendental masculine subject. In To the Lighthouse, Woolf manipulates narrative time to expose Oedipal imperialism in the text of memory and the economy of desire. In The Years, Woolf uses burlesque and the discordant polyphony of marginalized voices to disrupt and deconstruct the patriarchal narrative of the good life. While Woolf's other novels are beyond the scope of this study, one can plausibly speculate that, were a similar study undertaken on Woolf's other novels, a similar consistency of political ends might be found among the diversity of formal experimentation.

The three chapters on the novels also suggest a progressive shift in emphasis in Woolf's fiction from the construction of the self to the constructed self's engagement with society. In his article "Touching Earth: Virginia Woolf and the Prose of The Years," Alan Wilde sees a similar movement in Woolf's fiction: "Divided by only some fifteen years, 'A Summing Up' and Between the Acts describe a curve that wrenches the assumptions and imperatives of modernism away from the need to order and transcend a broken world toward the recognition of the phenomenal, whatever its gaps and fissures, as the locus and source of experience" (161). According to Wilde, Woolf moves out of modernism's subjective idealism and into an engagement with the world that is not dominated by modernism's epistemological problems, an engagement that elsewhere Wilde describes as postmodern. While I agree with Wilde that the progression of Woolf's fiction can be described as a movement of emphasis away from the subject, it seems to me that Wilde exaggerates the discontinuity between the earlier and later works. In Jacob's Room Woolf focuses on the subject and the accompanying epistemological problems, but as they are constructed by and embedded in what Wilde calls the phenomenal. In To the Lighthouse, Woolf deals with the same epistemological problems, but in relation to the intersubjective interaction of the dramas of desire. In The Years, these epistemological problems are part of the larger problem of discovering a way of living the good life: the instability of the subject is part of the instability of phenomenal reality itself In the progression of Woolf's fiction there is continuity as well as discontinuity: in all three novels Woolf approaches similar problems, but with a progressive shift in emphasis away from the subject. It must, of course, be noted that any attempt to construct a pattern or progression in Woolf's work on the basis of three of her novels only is nothing more than tentative. Mrs. Dalloway and Between the Acts fit well into the progression, Orlando complicates it, and The Waves, Night and Day, and The Voyage Out perhaps destroy its usefulness as anything other than a general description.

This thesis intervenes in the field of Woolf criticism at a number of specific locations. The chapter on Jacob's Room takes as its point of departure critical comments by Makiko Minow-Pinkey and by Raymond Williams. It seems that neither of these critics fully explicate the relation between the novel's formal experimentation and the novel's politics. The chapter takes issue with this, and consequently reaches a more positive evaluation of the novel's social criticism. The chapter on To the Lighthouse responds primarily to the criticism of the novel by Elizabeth Abel and by Gayatri Spivak. Abel presents a Freudian reading that the chapter presses further by following the deconstructive hint given by Spivak. The chapter argues that the text presents Mrs. Ramsay as a signifier, not just in Freudian or Kleinian narratives of desire, nor in Spivak's aesthetics of desire, but in a multiplicity of radically unstable economies of desire that are constantly disintegrating under the pressure of desire's untotalizable chaos. Woolf's critique of the Freudian narrative in To the Lighthouse is, then, a delineation of the incessant violence of the attempt to impose an Oedipal structure upon desire. The chapter on The Years responds to two aspects of criticism of the novel. It argues against political criticism of the novel that attempts to reduce the novel to a unequivocal political statement about what the good society should be. Also, it attempts to complement S.P. Rosenbaum's analysis of the relation between Woolf's fiction and G.E. Moore's philosophical realism. In "The Philosophical Realism of Virginia Woolf," Rosenbaum examines the relation between Moore's epistemological dualism and Woolf's fiction. He does not analyse the relation between Moore's ethics and Woolf's fiction, however. The chapter argues for the importance of such an analysis for understanding The Years.

Broadly, this thesis is one of a large number of philosophical readings of Woolf's texts, each of which, it seems, brings to bear on Woolf's texts a different philosophy. Woolf's texts seem to be particularly amenable to philosophical readings. In The Bloomsbury Group: A Study of E.M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf and Their Circle, J.K. Johnstone interprets Woolf's texts through Roger Fry's philosophy of art. James Hafley's study, The Glass Roof, connects Woolf's works with the philosophy of Henri Bergson. Mark Hussey's The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction argues that Woolf is a mystical existentialist. A number of extended deconstructive readings of aspects of Woolf's works have been written. Both Abel's and Minow-Pinkey's explorations of the construction of the subject in Woolf's texts are informed by deconstructive theory. Perry Meisel's The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater is, among other things, an excellent deconstructive reading of the aesthetics of Woolf's fiction and literary criticism. However, as far as I am aware, no deconstructive readings of Woolf's politics have been written. This thesis, hopefully, goes a short way toward filling that gap.

The last words are Woolf's: "There is going to be no peroration - no peroration!" (The Years 328).

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